

vol. [20]

REFLECTIONS

EL SHA'RAWY
الشعر اوان

فواطـر

المجلد [20]



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

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the chapter of

Fatir

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

The chapter of *Fatir*⁽¹⁾:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولَى أَجْنَحَةٍ
مَّثْنًى وَثُلثَ وَرُبْعَ يَزِيدُ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١﴾

**Praise be to God, Creator of the heavens and earth,
who made angels messengers with two, three, four
[pairs of] wings. He adds to creation as He will: God
has power over everything [1] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 1)**

We have previously commented on the Quranic chapters that begin with ‘All praise is due to Allah’, namely, *al-An’am*, *al-Kahf*, *Saba*’ and this one, *Fatir*. In each of them, the sentence has a significant meaning. Man has been created from nothing. The world has been made for him with all the means necessary to sustain his life. Then, there will be resurrection, and the Afterlife with all that is promised in there. All that is the work of Allah Who has made it all from nothing

The chapter of *al-Kahf* starts with praising Allah for sending down guidance to humankind: ‘All praise is due to Allah, Who revealed the Book to His servant...’ (*al-Kahf*: 1). Prosperity of humankind on earth is dependent on divine guidance without which we would not know right from wrong and creation would annihilate itself. As for the chapter of *Saba*’, it starts with praising Allah for His blessings in this world and the Hereafter. In the chapter

(1) *Fatir* is a Meccan chapter according to the majority of scholars. Al-Qurtubi said so in his Quran Exegesis (8/5590) and it is the 35th chapter in the order of the Noble Quran. It contains 45 verses and it was revealed after the chapter of *al-Furqan* and before the chapter of *Maryam*, and is therefore the 42nd Quranic chapter to be revealed. It is also called the chapter of *al-Mala’ika* due to the angels being mentioned in it.

of *Fatir* we are considering, the opening verse says: 'All praise is due to Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth; the Maker of the angels, apostles flying on wings...' (*Fatir*: 1). Praise is due to Him for all that He has created in the heavens and earth- that which we know and that which we do not- for the purpose of preserving and sustaining our lives.

All praise belongs to Allah. Even when you thank a human being, you thank them for a service he has done you. It would never be in his power to offer you that were it not for the abilities Allah has granted him, so even when you praise him, praise actually goes ultimately to Allah. None of us is actually in possession of whatever he gives to others or enjoys himself. Everything belongs to Him, and all praise is due to Him.

In the opening verse of the chapter of *Fatir*, praise is ascribed to Allah for His creation of the heavens and earth, that miraculous creation that started from nothing. They were not created based on any formerly produced examples of creation. Allah originated them and perfected them by His Might. Allah has honoured humankind by making them vicegerents on earth. He has made them superior to all other creatures and has distinguished them by the power of the mind by which they can choose between alternatives.

The creation of man is a miracle. However, the creation of the heavens and earth is greater and more tremendous. For this reason, Allah mentions them particularly. The word 'heavens' refers to everything that is above you. It includes, for example, the clouds from which rain comes down, as He says: 'And so We caused the gates of heaven to open with water pouring down in torrents' (*al-Qamar*: 11). This does not refer to the sky that directly faces the earth.

Allah says regarding the creation of the seven heavens: '...who has created seven heavens in full harmony with one another...' (*al-Mulk*: 3). They are perfectly made, not a hole or a crack may ever be found in them, but how then do the angels descend through them? How do they come down to the earth? Allah says: '... the angels and the Spirit [the Angel Gabriel] descend again and again with their Lord's permission on every task' (*al-Qadr*: 4).

Allah makes it plain that the missions and duties assigned to angels require ascending and descending from the heavens. Now, how do they pass through the

sky when it does not contain any holes or cracks? The answer is this: they pass through, for their diaphanous nature as angels allows them to do so.

Man, for example, is created from clay, and clay has a mass and a volume, which does not allow it to pass through anything. As for jinn, Allah has created them from fire, and fire also has a mass and a volume, but it is more delicate and more translucent than clay, and for that reason the jinn can pass through material things. An apple behind your wall would hardly send its aroma, let alone its dimensions, through to you. You would not be able to smell it, let alone see it. However, when a fire is ignited behind the wall, it would not be long before you feel its heat from the other side. Jinn have this light nature.

As for the angels, they are superior creatures and the highest of all of them, for Allah has created them from light and it is more delicate and more diaphanous even than fire. For this reason light does not need passageways. Have you seen, for example, the rays that penetrate the body and give us a complete accurate image of the organs inside? In such a manner the angels pass through the heavens and nothing prevents them.

Allah says about the angels: ‘And they say, “The Lord of Mercy has taken offspring for Himself [the angels].” May He be exalted! No! They are only His honoured servants’ (*al-Anbiya*: 26-27). Some of the angels have been created solely for glorifying Allah. They are completely absorbed in devotion and do nothing but worship. These do not know anything about the universe and have no connection to it in any way. Other angels, the ones who were commanded to prostrate to Adam, have been created to do tasks in connection with humankind. Allah says about some of them: ‘Each person has guardian angels before him and behind, watching over him by Allah’s command...’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 11). Allah sends angels and gives them commands to protect His servants. They do their duty by the Will of Allah, so they cannot protect anyone from a thing Allah has decreed for him. A popular Egyptian proverb says, ‘The eye has a guard over it’ which alludes to the guardian angels. Some people experience accidents, but they survive as if by a miracle. Simply, Allah has willed that they would be rescued, so they survive those accidents with no injury.

Among the angels are also: ‘... those who regulate the affair’ (*an-Nazi’at*: 5). They are the ones who manage the affairs of the creation by the command of

Allah. Some angels are responsible for recording deeds: 'watchers, noble recorders...' (*al-Infitar*: 11).

Some angels are message-bearers. Some of them were sent down either to Allah's Messengers to reveal to them divine messages they were chosen to deliver to people. Others have missions related to the service of humankind in general.

Allah then describes the angels by saying: '...flying on wings, two, and three, and four...' (*Fatir*: 1). This description corresponds to the missions angels are assigned that require ascending and descending between the heavens and earth. Not only two, three, or four, but: '... He increases in creation what He pleases...' (*Fatir*: 1). We have only seen birds with just two wings, but we should not be amazed, for this is the creation of Allah Who increases in creation what He pleases. He is the One Who has absolute power. No limits or moulds govern the works of the Almighty Lord. Rather, His absolute power to create anything has been manifest ever since he made the father of humankind, Adam *peace be upon him*. The norm is that reproduction requires a male and a female, and from this natural process have the great mass of humankind emerged. However, Allah Who is the Creator of norms have showed us signs that display His Absolute Power that knows no limits and is not bound by the abilities that the human mind can comprehend. Allah has created Adam without a father or a mother, created Eve from a father without a mother, and He created 'Isa (Jesus) from a mother without a father.

So long as Allah is the One Who creates, then do not be amazed or suspicious when you hear this Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'I saw Gabriel and he had six hundred wings.'⁽¹⁾ So long as this is what the Messenger of Allah has said, there is no room for doubt. When Companion Abu Bakr As-Siddiq was told about the miraculous Night Journey of Prophet Muhammad, 'Your companion has said such and such...!' He only replied, 'If

(1) *This Hadith is cited by Ahmad in his Musnad (1/412, 460) on the authority of Ibn Mas'ud when he interpreted the words of Allah: 'And, indeed, he saw it descend a second time by the lote-tree of the farthest limit' (an-Najm: 13-14). He said, 'The Messenger of Allah said, "I saw Gabriel and he had six hundred wings from which embellishments, pearls, and rubies spread." In his exegesis, Ibn Kathir deems its chain of narrations authentic (4/251).*

he truly said that, then it is true.’⁽¹⁾ So long as the source is verified, so long as we know those are the revelations of Allah sent down to His Messenger, then it is true. So long as a command is from Allah, it is for our good and we have to obey it, regardless of whether or not we understand the wisdom behind it.

Some give themselves a hard time trying to discover the wisdom behind every act of worship and every command of Allah. For example, they would say that if Allah enjoins *sawm* (Fasting) so the wealthy can understand the pain of the hungry and have sympathy for the poor. Based on this logic, then the poor should not fast! However, this is a narrow-minded view, and when Allah ordains fasting for the poor and rich alike, we must comply, trusting the Wisdom of Allah *Glorified is He*. A patient would not ask a doctor why he prescribes for him a particular medicine. He would only follow the prescription, trusting that the doctor knows what he has to do. Only another doctor would discuss with him why he has prescribed certain medication. To Allah belongs the Highest Similitude; is there an equal to Him that can probably be fit for asking: why have You made such-and-such obligatory for us?!

Allah says: ‘... He increases in creation what He pleases...’ (*Fatir*: 1), which means nothing is beyond His Power. His absolute Power is evident in the endless varieties of creatures this vast universe is rich in. The creation of man is so full of wonders. He has created us quite different in physical features, character, and abilities. There is the tall, short, smart, awkward, blond, dark, etc. Every human being is a miracle walking on earth.

Allah shows us signs of His Power through His creation. A baby may be born with two heads or a hand with six fingers. An animal may have five legs. He has made some people handsome, with distinct fine features and delicate figures. Others are not really handsome, with irregularities in their features or defects in their physical forms. He has created the brave and the cowardly, the eloquent and the clumsy. Every bit of creation spells His Might and Majesty. Allah says: ‘And among his wonders is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your tongues and colours...’ (*ar-Rum*: 22).

(1) It is cited by *Al-Qurtubi* in his *exegesis* (5/4012), and the full version tells, 'Do you believe what he said before you hear it from him?' He said: 'Where are your minds? I believe that he receives news from heaven, so is it hard to believe that he went to Jerusalem? Heaven is much farther!'

From His Absolute Power also 'He bestows the gift of female offspring on whomever He wills, and the gift of male offspring on whomever He wills; or He gives both male and female [to whomever He wills], and causes to be barren whomever He wills...' (*ash-Shura*: 49-50).

Another amazing manifestation of His Power is the harmony He has made in nature. Ponder the relationship between crocodiles and birds. Despite viciousness of the former and vulnerability of the latter, common benefits bring them together. A crocodile would go to the riverbank and open its mouth. Then birds would clean its teeth by picking up the remnants of the crocodile's food, meanwhile feeding themselves. If the birds sense a hunter approaching, they make a noise to warn the crocodile, which rushes back into the water. Glory is to Allah Who has created everything in the best form and guided everyone to the best path! Look at the neck of a giraffe or camel in contrast with that of a bear, for example. Each of them has that which is most suitable to them.

We have frequently mentioned the five senses and pointed out that scientists call them 'the five known senses'. This is to allow for more discoveries that unveil new senses the human body is endowed with. We know that there are other senses besides those well-known five, such as the sense by which we discern the thickness of a material, and that by which we determine the weight of things.

Allah has created in us all the same organs and systems in our bodies, each assigned a specific function. All of us see with the eyes, hear with the ears, smell with a nose and so forth. Still, the sharpness of each of the senses differs from one person to another. Have you not ever heard of a person who can hear the creeping of ants? History tells us of people who could see over unusually long distances.⁽¹⁾ Indeed, Allah increases in creation whatever He pleases and chooses for His bestowals whoever He wills. A poet says:

Glory is to Him Who divides gifts among His servants!

(1) Zarqa' was a woman from the tribe of Jadis in Al-Yamama. She was an example of unique eyesight. They say she could see an object from a distance that needed three days to be covered! It is narrated that Hasan ibn Taba' Al-Hamiri moved to invade Jadis. Zarqa' saw them as they set out from their land and warned Jadis, but they did not believe her. Hasan annihilated them, as a result. [*Al-A'alam* by Az-Zirikli 3/44].

He is the Lord and none can question His governance!

He has made some dim-sighted and some sightless

And gave Zarqa Al-Yamama eyes with such sharpness!

Zarqa' of Yamama had exemplary sharp eyesight. Another example of sharpness can be found in the following verses⁽¹⁾:

What sound judgement a girl of a tribe showed

when she looked at a flock of doves and hoped,⁽²⁾

'If only I had what equals their number and its half,
this would be a hundred doves with the one I have!'

They counted the doves to verify her accurateness
and found them exactly sixty six, not more or less!

She counted the doves as they flew on high and was right about their number which bears testimony to her strong vision and precision.

As much can be said about the sense of smell, we have a good example in dogs which can be trained to detect smells with absolute accuracy. All of us can tell whether a perfume smells pleasant or otherwise, but only few can detect whether it is made of rose or jasmine, or a mixture of both.

Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob) *peace be upon him* was able to distinguished the smell of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) from an exceptionally far distance. We know he was tested by the loss of his son Yusuf *peace be upon him* when his brothers threw him into the bottom of a well. He was overwhelmed with grief that he cried so much until he lost his eyesight. As the story is told in the Quran, we know that Yusuf was saved and attained to power, as he came to be in charge of all the treasure houses of Egypt. When shortages struck their land, the brothers of Yusuf went to him and asked for provisions. After some events, Yusuf recognized his brothers and gave them his shirt to put it on his father's

(1) This poet is An-Nabigha Adh-Dhibyani, poet of the highest calibre, from the people of Hijaz. A dome of red leather was established for him in the Market of 'Ukazh, where poets used to appear and present their poems to him. He was a source of inspiration to An-Nu'man ibn Al-Mundhir. He lived a long life and died eighteen years before *Hijra*. [*Al-Mawsu'ah Ash-Shi'riyyah*].

(2) This verse is from a poem of An-Nabigha Adh-Dhibyani.

face so he would be able to see again. What is amazing here is that when the caravan departed Egypt, just as it was leaving the populated areas where smells could hardly be told from one another, to the emptiness of the desert, Ya'qub said, while he was so far away in Palestine: 'I can smell Yusuf (Joseph)' (*Yusuf*: 94). He detected the smell of Yusuf that his shirt contained.

We know that smell is the strongest indication of a person, as distinct his voice of fingerprint. Smell is the last trace of someone that is able to remain in a place.

Likewise, some people have really amazing sense of taste, like professional tasters of food. The gifts Allah has endowed people with are endless. A cashier at a bank, by only touching the money with his fingers, is able to know whether it is genuine counterfeit, and so on. All these are manifestations of Allah's words: '... He increases in creation what He wills...' (*Fatir*: 1).

Allah concludes the verse with a statement that explains what has been said before. He says: '... surely Allah has power over all things' (*Fatir*: 1). Do not be too surprised, therefore, for the Power of Allah is limitless. It encompasses all things, from the atom to the galaxy. He is the One Who says to a thing 'Be!' and it is. Only a word from Him brings a thing from nothingness to existence.

Some have interpreted the Arabic structure of the verse quite differently. The Arabic for 'creation' is *khalq* which in another recitation is pronounced as *halq* which literally means 'throat'. Those who hold this view have interpreted '... He increases in *halq* what He wills...' as a reference to beauty and sweetness of the voice⁽¹⁾, for the voice is the means of transferring the thoughts of the speaker to the listener. A fine voice is also a gift from Allah that He bestows to whomever He wills.

So long as we are talking about gifts and talents, let me tell you one of the strangest stories the history of Arabs⁽²⁾ has ever recorded. It is about Nazar

(1) *Az-Zuhri and Ibn Jarir said, 'It is the beauty of the voice.' Qatada said, 'This refers to elegance in the eyes, beauty in the nose and sweetness in the mouth.' [Tafsir Al-Qurtubi (8/5591)]. Ibn Abbas also said this in what has been narrated from him by Ibn Mundhir. [Ad-Durr Al-Manthur Li-As-Suyuti (7/4)] The most sound view is that He increases in the creation of the angels what He wills, respecting the wings and other aspects.*

(2) *Imam ibn Al-Jawzi has mentioned this story in full in his book Al-Adhkiya' [p.174] and Ibn Hujja Al-'Humawi in Thamarat Al-Awraq fi Al-Muhadarat [1/249].*

ibn Ma'ad ibn 'Adnan. He had four sons: Mudar, from whose line Prophet Muhammad descended, Rabi'a, 'Iyad, and Anmar. When Nazar felt that his time was coming, he gathered his four sons and said to them: 'I want to tell you what I am bequeathing to you before I die: the red dome is for Mudar. The black horse and the black tent are for Rabi'a, the grey-haired woman is for 'Iyad and the people's council are for Anmar. If you fail to interpret my will, seek out Al-Afa Al-Jurhami in Najran and he will explain to you what I am saying.'

Failing indeed to understand the will of their late father, the four sons travelled to Al-Afa Al-Jurhami. On their way to Najran, in old Yemen, Muar saw a pasture where a camel were grazing, and on the other side there was a more beautiful pasture that had not been touched. He said, 'Indeed the camel that has been grazing here must be one-eyed.' Rabi'a said, 'It must be also cripple.' Anmar said, 'that camel's tail must have been cut off.' 'Iyad said: 'It must be a muddled camel.'

While they were thus talking, they met a man who was looking for his lost camel. He said, 'Have you seen a straying camel?' Muadar said, 'Is it one-eyed?' He said, 'Yes'. 'And cripple?' 'Yes.' 'Is its tail cut off?' 'Yes.' 'Is it muddled?' The man said, 'Yes, and you must have stolen him!' They sought Al-Afa Al-Jurhami, for they were close to Najran, to resolve the case, and they denied having stolen the camel.

Al-Afa said, 'Then how did you describe it to its owner with such precision?' Mudar said, 'It had been grazing on one side of the pasture and leaving the other better side of it, so I knew it was one-eyed.' Rabi'a said, 'I noticed the prints of its right hoof were clear whereas those of the left hoof were unclear, so I knew it was crippling.' 'Iyad said, 'I saw its dung gathered in one spot, so I knew its tail was cut off. If it had had a tail, its dung would have been dispersed here and there.' Anmar said, 'I saw it had been eating from different places, so I knew it was muddled.' Al-Afa Al-Jarhami said, 'Let them go, for this sharpness is a gift Allah grants to whomever He wills.'

Al-Afa then asked them, 'Who are you?' They said, 'We are the sons of Nazar ibn Ma'd ibn 'Adnan. Our late father advised us to seek judgement from you respecting the interpretation of His will.' They related to him what their father had said. He said, 'The red dome for Mudar means red dinars and

red she-camels.' For this reason, the tribe of Mudar was called Al-Hamra' (The Red [Tribe]).

He said, 'The black horse and the black tent mean every property that is black. As for the grey-haired woman, this means the least precious of wealth and sheep. As for Anmar, he shall have the white silver and the council.'

Having thus explained to them the will of their father, Al-Afa wanted to honour them as guests, so he ordered his servant to slaughter an animal and prepare a banquet for them. They sat at the dining table and began speaking, as he was reflecting on their minute observation. Rabi'a said, 'I have not seen anything better than this meat, only if it had not been fed a bitch's milk.' Mudar said, 'This is a good drink, except that its grape vine grew over a grave.' Then Anmar said, 'This man is a superior leader and a master, except that he is not his father's son.' Iyad said, 'Indeed we have not seen any speech more beautiful than the speech we have among ourselves!'

Al-Afa Al-Jurhami summoned the shepherd that had slaughtered the sheep for them and asked him about it, so the shepherd said, 'Its mother died after it was born, and we did not have any other sheep to feed it, so we resorted to the milk of a bitch to feed it.' He then asked his servant about the drink and received this reply, 'It is from the grapes that you planted on the grave of your father.' There was nothing left for him to do but ask about his family lineage, so he went to his mother and asked her, 'O my mother, tell me who I am and who my father is'; the mother suspected that he had heard the news, so she thought it useless to deny the truth. She said to him, 'Your father was a king who possessed sovereignty and wealth, except that he did not sire a child. I feared that his dominion and wealth would go to someone else, so I had to do what I did!'

When he returned to his guests, he said to them: 'You are not in need of me anymore, but indeed it is only that all people are becoming in need of you.' If you were to ask now: 'How did these people know all this?' We say: 'they knew it through deep insight and detailed observation that is referred to in the verse: 'He adds to creation what He wills' (*Fatir*: 1).

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

مَا يَفْتِجُ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ رَحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا وَمَا يُمْسِكُ
فَلَا مُرْسِلَ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

**No one can withhold the blessing God opens up for people,
nor can anyone but Him release whatever He withholds: He
is the Almighty, the All-Wise [2] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 2)**

As long as Allah *Glorified is He* is the Creator, then this necessitates that He provide for people all that they are in need of. First of all, people are in dire need that Allah provides for them that which helps them survive in this world, so Allah sends down rain through which the earth is revitalised with vegetation so that man can cultivate and eat and drink. This is the basic requirements of man's material life. Then Allah provides man with the requirements of his spiritual life; He reveals for him that which preserves his values and governs his good relationships with others. This is Allah's Grace about which He says: 'Are they the ones who share out your Lord's Grace?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32)

If Allah wants to be Merciful to any of His slaves, then 'No one can withhold the blessing Allah opens up for people, nor can anyone but Him release whatever He withholds...' (*Fatir*: 2).

When we reflect on the Quranic style in this verse, we find that Allah says, '...the blessing Allah opens up for people...' The opposite of 'to open' is 'to close', but Allah *Glorified is He* does not say: 'and whatever He closes'. Allah instead says: '... nor can anyone but Him release whatever He withholds...' (*Fatir*: 2). Then why does Allah use 'withhold' instead of 'close'? Scholars say that this is because something, which is closed, may be opened with a device or strength. On the contrary, no one is capable of obtaining anything that Allah has withheld.

The mercy that Allah opens to people includes the Message that Allah bestowed upon our Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This is why the disbelievers said, as the Quran relates to us: '...Why was this Quran not sent down to a distinguished man, from either of the two cities?'" (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

In another chapter, the Quran mentions that they also said: 'What! Upon him alone from among all of us should a [divine] reminder have been bestowed

from on high?' (*Sad*: 8) Allah *Glorified is He* responded to them: '... Are they the ones who share out your Lord's grace? We are the ones who give them their share of livelihood in this world...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32). This verse means that people should be well mannered when addressing Allah, for He *Glorified is He* is the One Who shares out all the affairs of this life among people. Should He leave it to you, according to your own whims, to assign who is worthy to receive the divine revelation?

Fath (opening) signifies the removal of a barrier between two things. It is of two categories: First, palpable such as opening a door or a suitcase, for example, Allah says: 'Thereupon, when they opened their packs, they discovered that their merchandise had been returned to them...' (*Yusuf*: 65). Second, impalpable, the opening can also be something immaterial, such as an opening the doors to goodness or mercy such as the revelation that Allah sent down to Prophet Muhammad. An example of this is the reference to the revelation that exists in the Torah regarding the description of the Prophet as about which Allah says: '...Do you inform them of what Allah has disclosed to you...' (*al-Baqara*: 76) .

Fath may also signify settlement of disputes which may arise among people as Allah says: '... Our Lord, decide between us and our people in truth, and You are the best of those who give decision.' (*al-A'raf*: 89)

The rationale behind Allah's saying: 'No one can withhold the blessing Allah opens up for people...' (*Fatir*: 2) is that Allah is One and He has no partner. There is no other god besides Him. If there had been another god beside him, the other god would have had another opinion and, thus, there would have been disagreement. Yet, as Allah *Glorified is He* is the One and Only God, He disposes His dominion as He wills. Had there been another god beside Allah, how can He then ensure that He commands something to 'Be!' and it responds to His Command?

Allah *Glorified is He* issues commands and He is fully certain that all creatures shall obey, as there is no one other one who can orders them otherwise. For this reason, Allah is the first to testify to His Divinity and Sole Unity. He testifies to this Himself when He says: 'Allah testifies that there is no deity save Him...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 18). This is testimony of the Only worthy God, Allah, for

Himself. Accordingly, when he orders anything to 'Be', there is no other alternative for it but to obey and fulfil the command.

In this regard, Allah says: 'When the sky is split asunder, obeying its Sustainer, as in truth it must' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 1-2). The meaning here is that the sky heard the Command from Allah and obeyed it because there is not another god, beside Allah, which may oppose it when it obeys Allah's Command.

After Allah *Glorified is He* has testified to Himself that He is the Only God worthy to be worshipped, the angels also testified to this pure truth as they witnessed it themselves. Then those who have been given knowledge testified also to this fact as they proved it through their knowledge. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah testifies – and [so do] the angels and all who are endowed with knowledge – that there is no deity save Him...' (*Al-Imran*: 18).

Then the verse under discussion concludes '...He is the Almighty, the All Wise.' (*Fatir*: 2). Indeed, as long as He is the Only One God without any partner, He sends His mercy to whomever He wills and He withholds it from whomever He wills, then He is *the Almighty*. *The Almighty* is the One Who cannot be overwhelmed or resisted. However, this does not mean that He acquired such Might and Triumph through tyranny, oppression or coercion. Yet, Might only originate from His Wisdom as He is Wise in His giving as well as in his withholding. Wisdom, as we have said, is to put things in their proper place. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ هَلْ مِنْ خَلْقٍ غَيْرِ اللّٰهِ يَرْزُقُكُمْ
مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْاَرْضِ لَا اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ فَاَنْفِ تَوَفَّكُوْنَ ﴿٢﴾

People, remember God's grace towards you. Is there any creator other than God to give you sustenance from the heavens and earth? There is no god but Him. How can you be so deluded? [3] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 3)

Allah *Glorified is He* bestows blessing upon His slaves and reminds them of His favours to them. He mentions the first of these favours; the favour of bringing the creation into existence from nothing. Allah wanted to present this fact to them in a way that let they themselves admit it. Therefore, He did not

state it as an informative sentence such as: 'I created you.' Rather, it is stated in the form of a rhetorical question: '... Is there any creator other than Allah to give you sustenance from the heavens and earth?' (*Fatir*: 3) It is known that when you put information in the form of a declarative sentence, it can be denied, but when you state the same in the form of a rhetorical question, it cannot be denied. One will not make a rhetorical question unless one is confident that the answer will come in accordance with what you want. When someone, for example, disavows a favour you have done to him, then do not say to him: 'I did such and such for you.' because he may deny you. Rather, you should instead say: 'Did I not do such and such on such and such a day?' At that point, he has no choice but to admit your favour and answer your question in the affirmative.

Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* makes them acknowledge His favours so that their acknowledgement shall be a proof against them. Although He *Glorified is He* Knows everything very well, He asks them: '...Is there any creator other than Allah to give you sustenance from the heavens and earth?...' (*Fatir*: 3) As they had nothing to do but to remain silent as they had not dared to deny it, Allah Himself answered the question: '...There is no god but Him....' (*Fatir*: 3). It was logical for them to believe as He *Glorified is He* is the Sole Creator and the Provider. Yet, they did not. Allah *Glorified is He* stated this fact in the form of a third person: '...There is no god but Him...' (*Fatir*: 3) instead of saying, 'There is no god but Me'. It is as if He *Glorified is He* is bearing witness to a matter of the unseen.

His saying: 'How can you be so deluded?' means that after all this: how can you turn away from His Oneness and from believing in Him? The Arabic word *ifk* means to take something out of its place and put it where it does not belong. Of this word another word is derived which is *Al-Mu'tafika* (mentioned in *an-Najm*: 53) which refers to the villages that Allah destroyed by turning them upside down.

Ifk means also to lie because the one who lies distorts the truth. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to them: 'How can you invert that which is true and how can you attribute the creation of Allah and the provision he bestows on all creatures to other than Him *Glorified is He*? Tell us the logic behind your argument, if there is any.

After Allah *Glorified is He* talks about His sole Unity and His Divinity; He wants to talk about the prophet whom the Only One God sent to the creation.

He *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِنْ يَكْذِبُواكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَتْ رُسُلٌ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ ﴿٤﴾

If they call you a liar [Prophet], many messengers before you were also called liars: it is to God that all things will be returned [4] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 4)

This is a consolation for our Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Such an address is repeated in other verses in the Quran such as Allah's saying: ‘ Say, “I am nothing new among Allah’s messengers”’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 9). Allah tells His Prophet Muhammad that he was not the first messenger to be denied by his people, as those who came before him were denied, too. This is something natural because Allah does not send a messenger except when corruption prevails and the people become corrupt without any deterrent that prevents them from evil, either at the individual or collective levels.

I have said before that indeed the Creator has placed in the human soul an inherent deterrent which holds one back when he deviates from the way of his Lord. This is the *An-Nafs Al-Lawama* (the reproachful soul). When one's soul becomes no longer reproachful and turns to be *nafs ammara bi-as-su*’ (the soul that is a persistent enjoiner of evil), here comes the role of the society, i.e. people at large should enjoin good and forbid evil. However, if the society becomes corrupt, then a new messenger must come with a new miracle to renew for people what they had become heedless of from the religion of Allah.

As Allah destined that the message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the last message and that no messenger shall come after him, then this is a testimony to the followers of Prophet Muhammad that there shall be always good people among them and that they shall preserve the religion of Allah.

His saying: ‘...it is to Allah that all things will be returned’ (*Fatir*: 4) means that all matters shall be settled in the Hereafter, so whoever has denied you from amongst your people Allah will either punish him in this worldly

life as He *Glorified is He* punished those who denied from the previous nations, or He will postpone his punishment until the Hereafter.

After that Allah *Glorified is He* talks about the third element of legislation. After talking about His Divinity and His Sole Unity and the Messenger Muhammad, He talks about the third element about which disbelievers differed with Prophet Muhammad that is the resurrection, the gathering and the reckoning.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّكُمْ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا يَغُرَّكُمْ بِاللَّهِ الْغُرُورُ

**People! God's promise is true, so do not let the present
life deceive you. Do not let the Deceiver deceive you
about Allah [5] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 5)**

This verse asserts to people that Allah's Promise that they shall return to Allah in the Hereafter and He will take them to account and reward you; those who do good for their goodness and those who do evil for their evildoing. This is a well-established and applied principle in all societies, even the most primitive of them. Even atheists apply this principle; the diligent are rewarded and the neglectful are punished. Indeed, some people put in place criminal laws that are harsher and more severe than the punishments set by Allah, such as the laws of capital punishment, hanging, the confiscation of wealth, etc.

Society cannot function properly without the sound application of this principle. If it is violated, corruption prevails in society, individuals become frustrated, and chaos becomes widespread. This is a natural conclusion in this case as those who do goodness are not rewarded for their goodness and criminals are not punished for their crimes. Therefore, we must instil in people a desire for goodness and a fear of evil, so those who do goodness can increase their goodness and those who do evil may be deterred from doing evil.

How is it that this principle is not accepted in a world full of injustices, transgressions, oppression, and tyranny? In addition, how is it disbelieved that a time shall come where everyone is given what they deserve?

For that reason, I always mention a conversation I had with some communists, who reject resurrection and reckoning. I was saying to them: 'You have taken

your enemies and killed them, confiscated their wealth and did other horrible things to them because -according to your view- they had changed the scales of giving. Then, what about those who committed such acts of oppression and transgression and, yet, got away from you and you could not punish them?! Further, what about the oppressors who had gone before you and those who will come after you? Is it not more correct to say that there shall come a time where all these people shall be gathered all together for reckoning, when every one of them will be given their reward? Will this reward not please you and gladden your hearts when you see the oppressor being punished for his oppression? Therefore, you must believe in this Day. You must not reject it and disbelieve in it, and it is based on the same principle to which you call.

We thus notice that the call here is directed to all of mankind: ‘O People! Allah’s promise is true...’ (*Fatir*: 5). Here, Allah tells all people that He promises that there shall be a day for judgment, resurrection and reckoning. The promise of Allah is true because the veracity of a promise is based on who makes it and his power to fulfil it. Is there anyone more powerful than Allah? We therefore should believe in the fulfilment of any promise if it comes from Allah *Glorified is He* exactly as we disbelieve in any promise made by someone who does not have inherent power to fulfil it.

I have clarified before that when one makes a promise, he has the intention, at the time of making the promise, to fulfil it. However, one may not be able to fulfil it due to an extraordinary. For that reason our Lord teaches us to have high etiquette in this regard in the chapter of *al-Kahf*: ‘And never say about anything, “Behold, I shall do this tomorrow” without [adding], “if Allah so wills”’ (*al-Kahf*: 23-24). Connecting your action to the Will of Allah protects you from being accusing lying in case you are incapable of fulfilling the promise. You can then say: ‘I intended to fulfil it, but Allah did not will it.’ Therefore the true promise is only Allah’s promise because He *Glorified is He* alone possesses all the means for fulfilling His promise and nothing can hinder Him from fulfilling the promise, neither does anyone can resist him.

As long as the promise of Allah is true, then ‘... so do not let the present life deceive you....’ (*Fatir*: 5). Therefore, do not let life deceive you because people are of different dispositions; some people become deluded when

others praise them and some other people become deluded because of their own whims and desires, and a third group of people may be deceived by the temptations of the life of this world as this enable them to live without obligations and duties exactly as what the disbelievers did when they worshipped stones because they were gods without any commandments.

This is why our Lord warns us not to be deceived by the life of this world to ignore what is very much better than it, the Hereafter. It suffices as a disparagement for this worldly life that Allah has called it *Ad-dunya* (the lowest) whose opposite is a higher life which is the Hereafter. The meaning here is thus that you, people, do not let the life of this world distract you from fulfilling the obligations Allah demands from you, which –if you preserve them, will qualify you to enjoy a higher life.

I have already clarified that the life of this world, in relation to man, is the period of his remaining in it, not the entire duration of the life of this world from the beginning of creation to its end. Your life span in the life of this world, despite how short it is, is a presumed life span. Your blessings in it are according to your activity in it. As for your life span in the Hereafter, it is certain and your blessings in it are according to the Power of Allah. You, whenever you achieve a blessing of the life of this world you feel annoyed that you shall surely leave it; either you will leave it when you die or you will always fear worried of losing it and hence you continue your life sleepless, preoccupied and scared of losing your blessing. As for the Hereafter, the blessings remain forever; they are not cut off or withheld. So, if you are deluded by the life of this world, then consider this comparison.

Thus, when Allah *Glorified is He* talks about this life, he describes it as *dunya* (the lower), and when He talks about the Hereafter He says: ‘...the life in the hereafter is indeed the only [true] life: if they but knew this!’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 64) *Al-hayawan* (true life) signifies the true everlasting life that is not limited by death or destruction. You must therefore be vigilante and choose the option that is superior and more beneficial for you. For this reason we say to those who depend on Allah and live under His protection and according to His guidance that they know how to make use of their lives; they follow the shortest path, i.e. the path of Allah. Those people are good planners.

In another verse of the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* explains to us the snares and temptations of this worldly life as He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Alluring to man is the enjoyment of worldly desires through women, and children, and heaped-up treasures of gold and silver, and horses of high mark, and cattle, and lands. All this may be enjoyed in the life of this world – but the most beautiful of all goals is with Allah.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 14)

Allah's saying: ‘Do not let the Deceiver deceive you about Allah’ (*Fatir*: 5) refers to the Satan. The act of deceiving and delusion can be from one's own soul, without any external influence, or it could be promoted by the Satan who deceives and tempts people. Therefore, you face two enemies: the life of this world and its enjoyments and the Satan and his prodding and insinuations. Our Lord *Glorified is He* already warned us about the Satan as He said: ‘And if it should happen that a prompting from Satan stirs you up [to blind anger], seek refuge with Allah: behold, He is all-hearing, all knowing.’ (*al-A‘raf*: 200) The Meaning here is that man shall be aware of this enemy and be on his guard with him. Satan's animosity towards you is deep-rooted since the time of our father 'Adam and his hatred towards us is crystal clear. You should therefore take up a position against him, and that is why Allah *Glorified is He* says afterwards:

إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَاتَّخِذُوهُ عَدُوًّا إِنَّمَا يَدْعُو حِزْبَهُ لِيَكُونُوا مِنْ أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ ﴿٦﴾

**Satan is your enemy – so treat him as an enemy – and
invites his followers only to enter the blazing fire [6]
(The Quran, *Fatir*: 6)**

As long as he is an open enemy to you, then it is not permissible for you to make a truce with him, have peace with him, or obey him because when you obey him, he enjoys his enmity towards you. Therefore, you must take him as an enemy and duly resist him. The weakest of faith is that you do not obey him. If you want to be stronger than Satan is, then seek revenge from him and infuriate him by doing the opposite of what he asks you to do. As he enjoins evil, then you should do that which is good and as he commands you to do that which is bad, be diligent in doing good as if you are mocking at him and teaching him a lesson after which he has nothing to do but to get away

from you. This is because, as such, you make use of his enmity to your advantage and benefit from it. This is what infuriates him.

You can use the same principle with any other enemy, whether it is a devil from among humankind or jinn. You are able to make, out of his enmity towards you, something that will spur you for goodness and to love everything that is beautiful. The intelligent person is the one who benefits more from his enemy than from his friend.

How truthful is the description of a poet⁽¹⁾ who once said:

My enemies always do me favours and graces

May the Most Merciful not prevent me from all adversaries?

They look for my mistake and therefore I avoid it

And they compete with me and, as a result, I attain nobility

The true believer is able to benefit from the enmity of his enemy in many ways. He may, for example, work and strive to overcome his enemy instead of being lazy until his enemy attains a superior position or rank. In addition, He avoids vices and evil actions so that he does not give his enemy any opportunity to rejoice at his misfortune etc.

Furthermore, I see that indeed some of the blameworthy qualities of people have aspects of goodness, if only we reflected on them. The miser, for example, is despised by all people, but when you consider this situation from another angle, you find that he is the one who helps the generous man to continue in his generosity. We may see the following example happen in many places: a generous man whose income does not help him to fulfil the requirements of this generosity and its responsibilities, such as magnanimity, spending, giving, and courtesy etc. Every now and then, he becomes forced to sell a piece of his land to spend out from it. Now consider that such a stingy miser is not

(1) These verses of poetry are attributed to Abu Hayyan Al-Andalusi. His full name is Muhammad ibn Yusuf ibn 'Ali. He was born in 654 AH. He heard Hadith in Andalusia, Africa, Alexandria, Cairo, and the Hijaz from about 450 scholars. He was strictly truthful, well-established scholar and of pure faith, free from innovation. He died in Cairo in 745 AH at the age of 90. These two verses of poetry are from a poem which is included in his *Diwan* (collection of poetry). He lived during the Mamluki era.

available to buy the land, and then to whom can the generous man sell his land? It is as if the miser is helping the generous man to continue in his generosity.

If the generous man captivates you with his generosity and you become indebted to him for his favour, then the miser has no favour over you and you are not indebted to him in any way. This is why a poet expressed this meaning saying:

May a miser is rewarded on my behalf a good action

As he did not overburden me

It means that he does not have a favour over me that would make me a slave to his beneficence.

The meaning of ‘...so treat him as an enemy...’ (*Fatir*: 6) is that you employ all your abilities and talents to instil in yourself the necessary immunity against his evil temptations and whisperings. If you want to increase your power to resist him, then do more good actions that he hates. If he comes to you during the prayer in order to spoil it, then infuriate him by having devotion and humility therein and work on improving it.

Then the verse concludes: ‘...and invites his followers only to enter the blazing fire.’ (*Fatir*: 6) This verse signifies that the Satan has a group which he is trying to expand and make bigger. This is why Allah says in another Quranic verse: ‘Satan (Iblis) has gained mastery over them, and has caused them to remain oblivious of the remembrance of Allah. Such as these are *hizb* (partisans) of Satan: oh, verily, it is they, the partisans of Satan, who will truly be the losers!’ (*al-Mujadala*: 19) The meaning of *hizb* is a group that fanatically support an idea and work hard for its realization, in opposition to another group that counter them and strive for the realization of another idea which serves its interests.

The reason why he invites people to his deviant path is to make a large group and, thus, those who go astray from the way of Allah become much more than those who believe in and obey Allah.

As for His saying: ‘... only to enter the blazing fire’ (*Fatir*: 6), the letter *lam* stated in the Arabic text is called *lam Al-'Aqibah* (it is used for showing the consequence). Accordingly, the meaning is that one wants something for a certain reason, but he ends up at a conclusion other than that for which he aspired.

The Arabic word *ashab* (owners or companions) mentioned in this verse signifies that there is an intimacy between them and the fire; it urgently waits for them exactly as friends are very attached to one another.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا
الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿٧﴾

Those who disbelieve will be punished severely; those who believe and do good deeds will be forgiven, and richly rewarded [7] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 7)

After Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned the party of Satan, he mentions the judgement against him. He decrees that those who disbelieve will be punished severely, and on the contrary, those who believe and do good deeds will be forgiven, and richly rewarded.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَفَمَنْ زُيِّنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ فَرَآهُ حَسَنًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي
مَنْ يَشَاءُ فَلَا تَذْهَبْ نَفْسُكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَتٌ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٨﴾

What about those whose evil deeds are made alluring to them so that they think they are good? Allah leaves whoever He will to stray and guides whoever He will. [Prophet], do not waste your soul away with regret for them: Allah knows exactly what they do [8] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 8)

This verse begins with an interrogative style ‘What about those whose evil deeds are made alluring to them so that they think they are good?’ However, the opposite is not mentioned here and the implied meaning is: is this person equal to the person whose evil deeds are not alluring to him? Allah *Glorified is He* does not mention the answer because it is obvious and well known. The only thing anyone can say is that they are not equal. Amongst people are those who do evil and admit that it is an act of evildoing. On the other hand, there is another category of people who do evil deeds and claim that they are good. This is

much greater sin because they commit a crime when they do an evil deed and they commit another crime when they claim that it is good. This is the meaning of: ‘... are made alluring to them ...’ (*Fatir*: 8). This is a distorted way of seeing things and deviation from truth. This is why He *Glorified is He* says after that: ‘... Allah leaves whoever He will to stray and guides whoever He will....’ (*Fatir*: 8) Concerning this verse, many people argue: ‘If Allah is the One Who guides or misguides people, then why is man taken to account?’ If we are to clarify this issue, then we must explain the meaning of ‘He guides’ and ‘He misguides’. The meaning of ‘He guides’ is: He indicates to someone the path of goodness and guides him to it. The guidance is from Allah to all of mankind. Whoever seeks and follows this guidance arrives at the path of goodness and, hence, Allah aides him and increases him in guidance, as He *Glorified is He* 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-consciousness.’ (*Muhammad*: 17)

As for the one who closes his ears, then he does not hear and he is not guided and thus strays from the straight path. Allah helps him as well to achieve his goal and increases him in misguidance. He seals his heart so that it can be for what he wants; faith does not enter his heart and disbelief does not exit from it. These are the people about whom Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘In their hearts is disease and so Allah lets their disease increase; and grievous suffering awaits them because of their persistent lying.’ (*al-Baqara*: 10) This is why He *Glorified is He* says also about the people of Thamud: ‘And as for [the tribe of] Thamud, We offered them guidance, but they chose blindness in preference to guidance...’ (*Fussilat*: 17). The meaning of ‘...offered them guidance...’ here is that we showed them and guided them to the path of goodness, but they rejected this guidance, opposed Allah, and therefore became misguided. Further, He *Glorified is He* let them increase in misguidance.

To elucidate this issue, I said before: Imagine that you want to go to some place and you arrive at a fork in the road, but you do not know which way will lead you to your destination. You go to the traffic conductor, ask him which way you should follow, he shows you and therefore you thank him and gratefully acknowledge his favour. When He sees you obeying Him and

thanking Him for his favour, he says to you, 'But in front of you on this path is an obstacle and I will accompany you until you pass it.' This is how Allah *Glorified is He* treats those who are willing to be guided: 'just as for those who are [willing to be] guided, He increases their [ability to follow His] guidance and causes them to grow in Allah-consciousness.' (*Muhammad*: 17)

Allah *Glorified is He* addressed His Prophet Muhammad saying: 'Indeed, [O Muhammad], you do not guide whom you like' (*al-Qasas*: 56) and: 'And indeed, [O Muhammad], you guide to a straight path' (*ash-Shura*: 52). In these two verses, Allah affirms that Prophet Muhammad indicates and shows people the way to guidance, but he negated for him the ability to force people to become guided, for the one who really guides is Allah.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* does not leave the matter there, but goes on to explain who is guided and who is misguided as He says: 'Indeed, Allah does not guide the disbelieving people.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 67) and He says: '... And Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.' (*as-Saff*: 5) Does the one who disbelieves in Allah, deviates from His way, spreads corruption in the land and oppresses people, deserve to be guided? In His saying: 'So do not let yourself perish over them in regret' (*Fatir*: 8), Allah tells His Prophet Muhammad, 'Do not destroy yourself with sorrow because of their lack of faith.' This meaning is elucidated by Allah *Glorified is He* saying: 'Then perhaps you would kill yourself through grief over them, [O Muhammad], if they do not believe in this message, [and] out of sorrow.' (*al-Kahf*: 6)

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was keen for his people to be guided and he felt immense pain when one of them turned away from the path of faith. This is why He *Glorified is He* said about His prophet Muhammad: 'Indeed, there has come to 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).

Then He *Glorified is He* says, to console His Messenger Muhammad: '...Allah knows exactly what they do.' (*Fatir*: 8) This means that no secret action of theirs is hidden from Him and He will inflict on them the punishment they deserve according to the disdain and disbelief that they showed.

After that Allah *Glorified is He* directs our attention to some of the universal signs that refer to His blessing towards the creation, He says:

وَاللَّهُ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيحَ فَثِيرُ سَحَابًا فَسُقْنَهُ إِلَى بَلَدٍ
مَيِّتٍ فَأَحْيَيْنَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا كَذَلِكَ النُّشُورُ ﴿٩﴾

It is Allah who sends forth the winds; they raise up the clouds; We drive them to a dead land and with them revive the earth after its death: such will be the Resurrection [9]
(The Quran, *Fatir*: 9)

The meaning of ‘sent forth the winds’ is that He moves them and all goodness in creation is due to the movement of the winds. Have you not seen that when the air is still, man becomes frustrated and his respiration becomes slow? Therefore, one tries to move air around oneself, either by his hand or using a fan. This is because one's respiration is not possible without the moving of air; carbon dioxide being replaced by oxygen. That is why it is said: ‘If air does not pass over you then you pass over it’, i.e. you move it.

A result of the moving of the winds is the raising up of the clouds: ‘...they raise up the clouds...’ (*Fatir*: 9). The meaning of rising up the clouds is to propel them from their places until they gather together and fall down in the places where Allah destined them to fall down. Accordingly, we know that the movement of the clouds is not automatic, but rather, they follow the movement of the wind. This matter helps us understand Allah's saying: ‘And you see the mountains, thinking them rigid, while they will pass as the passing of clouds’ (*an-Naml*: 88).

Although we think that they are solid and rigid, the mountains are in reality passing away and moving exactly like the clouds. As the clouds do not pass away by themselves, but rather by the movement of the wind, the mountains too do not pass away by themselves but rather as a result of the movement of the earth; the mountains are fixed upon the earth like pegs and so they move with its movement. This is the ‘... work of Allah, who has ordered all things to perfection...’ (*an-Naml*: 88)!

Some people mistakenly understand the movement of the earth that is followed by the movement of the mountains, referred to in Allah's saying: '...[and they] pass away as clouds pass away...' (*an-Naml*: 88) that this will take place in the Hereafter. However, will there be mountains in the Hereafter?! Allah *Glorified is He* says about them: 'and the mountains will be like tufts of wool' (*al-Ma'arij*: 9). Moreover, how does Allah show us his blessings upon us and His favour towards us with His perfect creation of the movement of the mountains in the Hereafter, where there is no obligation or a room for attracting people's hearts to believe in Allah?!

This all has to do with the movement of the wind. As for its stillness, Allah says: 'if He so wills, He stills the wind, and then they lie motionless on the sea's surface...' (*ash-Shura*: 33). The word 'they' in this verse refers to the ships that are propelled by the wind. However, one may say: 'Is there any significance of this verse after the developments that have occurred with regards to ships, as sails have been done away with and replaced by engines that propel the ships without any need for the movement of the air?!' In response to this we say: 'Yes indeed, this verse shall have significance till the end of time because modern inventions do not come as a surprise to their Creator. Moreover, who argues that the word *Ar-Rih*, mentioned in the verse, refers only to air? Rather, it signifies power, regardless of its form. This meaning is referred to in Allah's saying: '...and do not [allow yourselves to] be at variance with one another, lest you lose heart and your strength desert you...' (*al-Anfal*: 46). The word 'your strength' here signifies all forms of power; power of air, electric power, steam power, or engines, etc.

In this verse, we notice that the verb '...He sent...' (*Fatir*: 9) is in the past tense, but 'they raise' is in the present tense. This signifies that the command to the winds is already settled, whereas the propulsion and movement of clouds is being renewed and continued at every moment, and therefore, it is stated in the present form which refers to both the present and the future times.

Stating the verb in the past form may also be because the discourse here is about a matter of the unseen as the speech is in the third person. The discourse then moves from the third person in '...sent the wind...' (*Fatir*: 9) to the position of first person and says '...We drive it...' (*Fatir*: 9). It is as if Allah is

turning our attention from the reference to the third person, Allah, to His Presence. When you realise that it is Allah doing all this, you become worthy of Allah speaking to you. Another example of turning from third person to first person style is the chapter of *al-Fatiha*: ‘In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Mercy-Giving [1] All praise is due to Allah alone, the Lord of all the worlds, [2] The Most Merciful, the Mercy-Giving, [3] Lord of the Day of Judgment [4]’ (*al-Fatiha*: 1-4). All of this is in the third person until the speech turns to the second person: ‘You alone do we worship; and to You alone do we turn for aid.’ (*al-Fatiha*: 5)

He did not say: ‘He alone we worship’ so that He could turn you from the third person to the second person; to directly address Your Lord because you have become worthy of addressing Him and of Him addressing you after you have believed in Him as ‘the Lord of all the worlds, [2] The Most Merciful, the Mercy-Giving, [3] Lord of the Day of Judgment! [4]’ (*al-Fatiha*: 1-4)

The meaning of ‘...We drive them to a dead land...’ (*Fatir*: 9) is that Allah drove the cloud or the water, after it descended into the streams and rivers, towards the land that had no vegetation on it and from which could be benefitted. This indicates the power of Allah. Consider, for example, the water of the Nile that irrigates the Sudan and Egypt. From where does it originate? This is evidence that your sustenance comes to you regardless of how far you are from its source.

Allah states that when water does fall down to the earth, the result is that: ‘... [We, Allah] thereby give life to the earth after it had been lifeless...’ (*Fatir*: 9). This means that He revives it with vegetation. Allah *Glorified is He* makes the blessings of reviving the dead earth an evidence for another blessing that is relevant to the Hereafter. Allah says: ‘...even thus shall resurrection be!’ (*Fatir*: 9) This refers to the resurrection in the Day of Judgement and the bringing of the dead back to life from their graves.

So, you, human being, shall take the revival of the dead land, which is something you clearly see with your own eyes, as evidence on the veracity of what is hidden from you, for as water descends upon the dead earth and it comes to life, this is how it will be when the spirit descends upon the human matter buried in the earth to bring it back to life, resurrect it and seep life into it.

I have said previously that when scientists analysed the human body, they found that it is comprised of sixteen elements. The first of these is oxygen and the last is manganese. These themselves are the same elements constituting dust, which is the environment of vegetation.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعِزَّةَ فَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيعًا إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ يَمْكُرُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَكْرُ أُولَٰئِكَ هُوَ يُبْذَرُ ﴿١٠﴾

If anyone desires power, all power belongs to Allah; good words rise up to Him and He lifts up the righteous deed, but a severe torment awaits those who plot evil and their plotting will come to nothing [10] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 10)

The one who rejects the divine messages is rejecting the idea that a believer should be bound to follow and submit to the commands and injunctions given by another. Although the Messenger sent by Allah did only come to say to us: ‘Do this!’ and ‘Do not do that!’ some people consider their obedience to such commands a threat to their honour and dignity. Such people want to be the highest person who is not commanded or forbidden to do anything by anyone. These are the people about which this verse is talking. They want might and glory for themselves.

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* presents to those people the correct meaning of might and glory and shows them how foolish are they. He says: ‘If anyone desires might and glory, all Might and Glory belongs to Allah...’ (*Fatir*: 10). True might and glory means that you should not be overcome or defeated by anyone. This does not exist except when one returns to Allah, for whatever power and might one may acquire in this life, one, by necessity, shall be defeated, and overcome by death. Therefore, if you really desire might and glory that does not cease, then you will find it only with Allah. For this reason, Allah teaches us to be wise, as He says: ‘And rely upon the Ever-Living who does not die...’ (*al-Furqan*: 58). Allah addresses us in this verse saying: ‘I know you, I know your weakness and I know that you are in need of someone to rely on with regard to matters that are beyond your capacity, so beware of

taking refuge in other than Me, for I am the Ever-Lasting One Who does not die. When you rely on a weak person like yourself, perhaps he may die before he fulfils your need. Therefore, whoever wants might and glory then let him turn to Allah; to rely on His Power and Glory. Whoever relies on Allah, He bestows upon him his grandeur and showers him with blessings.

This is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be on him* gave us this lesson when he, along with Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, were in the cave. As-Siddiq said: ‘O Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be on him*! If one of them looks under his feet, he will see us. Relying on Allah, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be on him* replied: ‘O Abu Bakr, what do you think about two people and Allah is the third of them?’⁽¹⁾ The Quran relates what he said: ‘...“do not grieve; verily, Allah is with us.’ (*at-Tawba*: 40)

The tranquillity that filled the heart of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be on him* was the result of Allah accompanying him and his companion, and this company means that Allah grants them assurance. As Allah *Glorified is He* is not seen, then whoever is in His Company will also not be seen.

The words *izzah* (Might and Glory) mentioned in Allah's saying: ‘...all Might and Glory belongs to Allah [alone]...’ (*Fatir*: 10) includes all kinds of might and glory. Some orientalist raise a misconception concerning this issue, arguing that there is a contradiction in the Quran as here Allah says: ‘...all Might and Glory belongs to Allah [alone]...’ (*Fatir*: 10) and in another verse, he says: ‘...However, all might and glory belongs to Allah, and [thus] to His Messenger and those who believe [in Allah]...’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 8).

The fact of the matter is that there is no contradiction between the two verses because all might and glory originally belong to Allah and the might and glory of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is from his attachment to the Almighty, and the might and glory of the believers is from their attachment to the beloved of the Almighty, i.e. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Accordingly, who is entitled to might and glory is the

(1) *Agreed upon Hadith which is related by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih [4662] and Muslim in his Sahih [3381] on the authority of Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, with another wording communicating the same meaning*

one who attaches himself to Allah and the first one who attached himself to Allah was His Messenger Muhammad and then those who believed in him.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... Good words rise up to Him...' (*Fatir*: 10). When we refer to Allah, we always refer to the sky, although He *Glorified is He* is everywhere and he does not have a fixed place. This is why some people argue: 'If Allah does not have a fixed place, then why did Allah lift our Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to the seventh heaven, when He wanted to speak to Him?' We say that the ascension was to the place where the one who was going to see, i.e. Prophet Muhammad, can see, not the place of the one being seen. He, Prophet Muhammad, cannot see except from this place. For example, if we hear a noise right now coming from outside the mosque⁽¹⁾ and this window that looks down at the noise is high up, what will you do if you want to know what is going on outside? You will have no choice but to climb to that height to see what is happening. In this case, events are as they are, but the place from which one sees is different.

'...Good words...' (*Fatir*: 10) is a general description that encompasses all speech that guides people to the path of goodness. In another verse, the Quran gives us an example of 'good words'. Allah says: 'Have you not considered how Allah presents an example, [making] a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches [high] in the sky? It produces its fruit all the time, by permission of its Lord.' (*Ibrahim*: 24-25)

Scholars have tried to define what is meant by this (good word). They said: 'The (good word) is 'there is no god but Allah, Glory be to Allah, All Praise is for Allah, and there is no strength except with Allah.' Nevertheless, restricting the meaning of the (good word) to signify these meanings, only narrows down the wide scope of the meaning intended by Allah *Glorified is He*. It is more correct for us to say that the good word is any speech that leads to goodness.

After Allah has talked about the ascension of good words to Him, he talks about raising good work up as Allah says: '...and He lifts up the righteous deed...' (*Fatir*: 10). This is because man may speak good words without performing that which they call for or without putting them into action. In the same vein, One may say it out of hypocrisy, like those who say 'there is no god but

(1) This exegesis of the Quran was originally delivered orally in mosques.

Allah' out of hypocrisy and fear of being killed. Although it is said out of hypocrisy, it ascends to Allah and Allah says that he is to be protected by this pronouncement of this word in the life of this world. Nevertheless, one will not be rewarded for it in the Hereafter because one gets reward only when one acts in accordance with that of which he speaks. Then what is more important is to do righteousness, not only to speak well. It is the righteous work that which is raised up and which protects one in this life and the life to come.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the opposite: '...but a severe torment awaits those who plot evil and their plotting will come to nothing.' (*Fatir*: 10) The verb *makara* (to cunningly devise) is sometimes used as a transitive verb, but followed by a preposition. At some other times, it is used as a transitive verb without a preposition as Allah says: '...cunningly devise evil deeds...' (*Fatir*: 10). Its usage in this context is like of the usage of the verb *amilu* (do) in the following verse: 'yet those who attain to faith and do righteous deeds...' (*an-Nisa*: 122). Accordingly, the meaning of the verse under discussion is 'those who do evil deeds'.

Then, He *Glorified is He* explains the reward of evil scheming as He says: '... but a severe torment awaits those who plot evil...' (*Fatir*: 10). This is because when you cunningly devise, as if you want to steal something from Allah and you think that He does not know about you. You ignore that although you do your utmost to secretly devise something, He *Glorified is He* knows what you conceal. Moreover, when you cunningly devise or plot, you plot to the best of your ability, but your Lord, likewise, devises and plots according to His Ultimate Power and Strength as Allah says: '...thus have they [always] schemed: but Allah brought their scheming to nought – for Allah is above all schemers.' (*al-Anfal*: 30)

That is why such scheming fails and comes to nothing as He has said: '...and their plotting will come to nothing'" (*Fatir*: 10). It is an uncultivated plan, like wasteland that does not grow or produce anything. This applies to His saying: 'Have you not considered those who exchanged the favour of Allah for disbelief and settled their people [in] the home of ruin?' (*Ibrahim*: 28)

The scheming that one thinks that it can benefit him, give him a privilege over his enemy and give him a higher status over him, will come to nought. It

will not come to any avail. Moreover, it will turn back on him and drag him to a severe punishment.

In '... but a severe torment awaits those who plot evil ...' (*Fatir*: 10) the letter *lam* used in the Arabic statement here indicates possession. Accordingly, this means that they deserved punishment, i.e. they deserve it, and it is as if the punishment is covetous over them in the same way that man is covetous over that which he owns. It is a punishment that will stick to them and never be separated from them.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ أُنْثَى وَلَا تَضَعُ إِلَّا
بِعِلْمِهِ وَمَا يُعَمَّرُ مِنْ مُعَمَّرٍ وَلَا يُنْقَضُ مِنْ عُمرِهِ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴿١١﴾

It is Allah who created you from dust and later from a drop of fluid; then He made you into two sexes; no female conceives or gives birth without His knowledge; no person grows old or has his life cut short, except in accordance with a Record: all this is easy for Allah [11] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 11)

This verse discusses the issue of the first creation of man, as vicegerent (*khalifah*). Creation had phases. The first man, Adam, was created at first from the earth; the dust that is mixed with water and thus it becomes clay. This clay went through numerous stages. If you leave clay until it decays and comes to have a smell, then this is stinking mud and if you leave it until and it becomes dry and sticks together then this is argillaceous earth. Therefore, these are the phases of one substance from which Allah fashioned Adam and then blew into him from His spirit. This is the first creation from which Allah created Eve and from both of them we have procreation and offspring.

In this Quranic chapter, before Allah *Glorified is He* talks about the creation of man, He has talked about what Allah created for people before they came into existence; He *Glorified is He* has talked about the creation of the heavens and the earth: 'Praise be to Allah, Creator of the heavens and earth' (*Fatir*: 1). He then has talked about the angels who descend with the revelation and

deliver it to Allah's Messengers who are chosen from amongst human beings and about the water that falls from the sky and causes vegetation to grow.

These things are essentials for the life of man. Allah brought them into existence before he brought man into existence and guaranteed for him the essentials of his material, mental and spiritual life. The material needs include the nourishment of food, drink, and air. The spiritual need is the way of the Quran. Therefore He *Glorified is He* says: 'The Most Gracious has imparted this Quran [to man]. He has created man' (*ar-Rahman*: 1-3).

Man was created for a purpose, exactly in the same way a manufacturer defines the purpose of the thing he is going to manufacture. For example, the person who made the television or the refrigerator did not make it and then say: 'Take these items and see how they should be used.' Instead, they had already determined its purpose and defined its objective before making them. Likewise, before the creation of man, Allah *Glorified is He* defined the purpose of his creation and, therefore, He sets for him in the Quran the way he should follow. As such, the creation of man came after the development of the way he should follow for attaining happiness.

Speaking of the creation of man, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...It is Allah who created you from dust...' (*Fatir*: 11). The speech here comes in the third person style as if He is talking about another one. Allah did not say 'I created you from dust'. It is as if it is we who say: 'Allah created man from dust.' This is because speech comes in three styles: the first-person style 'I', the second person style 'you' and the third person style 'he'.

When one talks in the first style and says: 'I did such and such', it is conceivable that he could be lying. If he it is stated in the second style, second person, such as: 'You did this', it may be said out of hypocrisy towards the one addressed. But when speech comes in the third person style such as: 'He did such and such', then we cannot be accused of lying as is the first case, nor can we be accused of hypocrisy as in the second case.

When we say: 'He created such and such', it means that none other than Him created. As I have said previously that the pronoun of the third person 'he' does not apply to other than Allah *Glorified is He* in this context.

If you review all the verses that discuss the creation in the Glorious Quran, you find that they are stated in the third person style. These verses which discuss this issue are one hundred and seven verses, starting with Allah saying in the chapter of *al-Baqara*: 'He it is who has created for you all that is on earth...' (*al-Baqara*: 29) and ending with His saying: 'Say: I seek refuge with the Sustainer of the rising dawn, from the evil of aught that He has created' (*al-Falaq*: 1-2).

The issue of creation is stated in the first-person style in seventy-six verses, such as: '...We [Allah] have created you all out of a male and a female...' (*al-Hujurat*: 13). The same issue is stated in the second person style in four occurrences. They are: '... Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly'" (*Al-Imran*: 191); His saying: '..."you created me from fire and created him from clay"' (*al-A'raf*: 12) and His saying: '..."Shall I prostrate myself before one whom You have created out of clay?"'" (*al-Isra*': 61)

Upon investigation, we find that the third person style is the most predominant of these the three styles because speech stated in this style is free of claims, free of showing any hypocrisy towards the one addressed, or any fabrication of the part of the speaker himself.

Yet, what is the meaning of creation? Scholars say that creation is the bringing of something into existence from nothing for an underlying reason or for a prior objective, not just bringing something into existence without any purpose. This may be illustrated as follows: if you take a large piece of dry clay and throw it on the ground, it will break up into various pieces of different shapes; a crescent, a star, a human or animal face, etc.

In this case, this is considered bringing something into existence, but it is not considered creation because creation is an intentional process of bringing something into existence for an intended purpose and for certain wisdom. This process is done by the Creator *Glorified is He* alone.

One may argue: 'how do you claim this, although Allah Himself affirms that we may create as He *Glorified is He* says: '...So blessed be Allah, the Best of creators' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14)? In reply, I say: 'Indeed the Creator acknowledges the efforts of human beings and He does not deprive them of their rights.

Therefore, Allah affirms that they may also create things, although there is a clear and big difference between the creation of Allah and the creation of others. When man is described as being a creator, then Allah is the best of creators because He *Glorified is He* creates out of nothing and man creates using materials which already exist. Your creation, human beings, takes one shape and fixed state. As for the creation of Allah, it develops, and life comes into it, i.e. it eats, grows, and reproduces and so forth.

I have told you previously an example of this. When one wants to manufacture glass, one takes the sand that Allah has created and then he processes it in a specific way in order to transform it into glass. This process is in fact a creation as this drinking glass did not exist before and he brought it into existence. However, you have manufactured using materials, the intellect and fire, which all are created by Allah.

Moreover, you are not able to grant this drinking glass the attribute of life so that it can grow up or reproduce, for example. Therefore, although Allah affirms that man may create thing, He *Glorified is He* is the best of all creators.

In the verse under discussion, Allah *Glorified is He* says to us: ‘... It is Allah who created you from dust [*turab*]...’ (*Fatir*: 11); in another occurrence in the Quran, He says: ‘...from clay [*tin*]...’ (*al-An‘am*: 2); in a third occurrence, He says: ‘...of black mud altered [*hama’ masnun*]’ (*al-Hijr*: 26) and, in another occurrence, He says: ‘...of clay like the potter’s [*salsal*].’ (*ar-Rahman*: 14) Although all these variations, there is no contradiction between these statements because they describe different phases of the same substance, exactly as the example I have given before about the clothes we wear. One may say, ‘This garment is made of cotton, from spinning thread or from knitting’ as these all are phases that one material goes through until it becomes a piece of cloth.

There is no inconsistency in these phases. The inconsistency can only be if something has one process, and then you make it several processes. This issue is only the phases of one process, like a baby becoming a boy, then a youth, then a man, then an old man and so forth. These are all stages of one man.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* has decreed in His universe certain things, and He has forbidden the intellect from venturing to think about them. He says: ‘I created for you the universe and I have secured for you the essentials

of your life. Therefore, if you wish to elevate yourself, then engage your intellect in the matter that Allah has created, and derive what you can from it to the best of your ability. But do not concern yourself with two matters, as there is no benefit in thinking about them; these two matters are the creation of the heavens and the earth and the creation of mankind. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'I did not make them witness to the creation of the heavens and the earth or to the creation of themselves, and I would not have taken those who misguide as assistants.' (*al-Kahf*: 51)

The creation of the heavens and the earth and the creation of man are a matter that not a single one of you witnessed, and there was no assistant with Allah *Glorified is He* who can inform you as to what happened. But be warned that in the future there will be misguiders who will mislead you regarding this matter, and they will say to you – as the misguiders are saying now – that the heavens and the earth were one burning piece, and then such and such happened to it, or that the origin of man is a monkey that developed into a man. Be wary of these people, and don not take your information except from the one who witnessed it and the one who knows it, and He is the True Lord *Glorified is He*.

But the True Lord *Glorified is He* created the intellect as an instrument for thinking, and He made outlets for it through which the truth can be arrived at, and conclusions can be made from what it sees regarding things that it does not see, and it is upon the intellect to reflect on what it sees and use it to judge regarding what it does not see.

We did not witness the process of creation, but we have witnessed the process of death and death is the reverse of creation, in the same way that demolition is the reverse of building. This is a philosophical issue for the intellect and it contains phases. When you want to build a tower, for example, and it consists of ten floors, you begin with the first floor. But if you want to demolish it you begin with the tenth floor. Demolition is the opposite of building, as death is the opposite of life.

Allah has informed us that which we have not witnessed from the process of creation in His Book, and He said: 'I created you from dust that became clay, and then the clay became stinking mud, and then the stinking mud became dry potter's clay that was shaped in the form of a man. Then Allah breathed into it from His spirit and life entered into it.

We have witnessed death and we have seen that its process is the opposite of creation. The first part of death is the spirit leaving from the body. Then the body stiffens until it becomes like dry potter's clay. Then it decays, and its smell changes as if it is stinking mud and then the earth soaks up whatever sap is left so that it can return to dust and morsels that are mixed in with the dust of the earth, and it returns to its mother from which it originally came.

Therefore, take what you have witnessed as an evidence of the veracity of what Allah has told you regarding what you have not witnessed.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* talks about two phases when He talks about creation. The first is the creation of the first man, Adam *peace be upon him* from clay, and in order for the multiplying and populating of the earth to take place there is the second phase, in which his spouse was created for him. He said: 'Who did create you from a single soul, and therefrom did make his mate' (*al-A'raf*: 189).

There is a lot of conjecture regarding this issue, but it is true that He *Glorified is He* took a piece from Adam *peace be upon him* and made Eve from it, so it is true that this piece was also made of clay. And from Adam and Eve the descendants were brought forth, and vicegerents were appointed to be on earth.

In order to avoid getting lost in the issue we say, His saying: 'and out of it created its mate,' (*an-Nisa'*: 1) meaning from the same species, the species that He created; as He *Glorified is He* said: 'Indeed, there has come unto you [O mankind] a messenger from among yourselves' (*at-Tawba*: 128) meaning: from your species.

But did Allah *Glorified is He* create this creation, and appoint His vicegerent to be on Earth, but then leave him without providing him with a method by which he could judge the proceedings of his life? No. There has to be a method because the meaning of there being a vicegerent requires that there be a method.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* puts His vicegerent in possession of things that are of use to him, he may become deluded by this very possession, so He says to him: 'Remember that you are not the first. You are a vicegerent.' So whenever you bear in mind that you are a vicegerent, you will not transgress, and you are made to transgress if you think that you are the first in the

universe. The first in the universe is the one who preserves what is in his possession. He is the one who does not become sick and does not die, and there is no one who is stronger than he is. Therefore, remember that you have been chosen to succeed, and as long as you are chosen to succeed then you must implement the commands of the one who has chosen you to succeed.

After the True Lord *Glorified is He* talks about the first of creation from dust, and the creation of his wife, he tells us about the general creation from which all human beings have come after Adam and Eve, and by marrying one another creation is completed by means of a drop of sperm. He *Glorified is He* says: 'then from a sperm-drop; then He made you mates.' (*Fatir*: 11) And in another place, He sets forth the phases of the drop of sperm, and He says: 'O People, if you should be in doubt about the Resurrection, then [consider that] indeed, We created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop, then from a clinging clot, and then from a lump of flesh, formed and unformed.' (*al-Hajj*: 5)

The first marriage was made between the children of Adam *peace be upon him* and then by inter-distance. The son of this womb marries his sister from another womb, and this is how the inter-distance was dependant on the progeny being increased as far as possible. This issue of inter-distance is what led to the first crime of murder amongst humanity, and it is the issue of Qabeel (Cain) and Habeel (Abel). When the life of this world was expanded and mankind multiplied, it became forbidden to marry one's sister, or maternal or paternal aunt.

Modern science has affirmed the importance of inter-distance in marriage, and that marriage between close relatives produces children that are weaker than children from parents who are not closely related. This is even the case in agriculture, as they have affirmed that cultivating seeds that are extracted from the same land produces a smaller harvest, and that's why in agriculture they have resorted to the process of hybridization.

The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* encouraged this inter-distance, for he said: 'Go further, and do not weaken.'⁽¹⁾ This means: Do not marry those

(1) What is related in this regard is what has been mentioned by Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali in his (*Ihya'*) [2/41]: 'Do not marry close relatives, for indeed the child is born scrawny.' Al-Hafizh Al-'Iraqi says in his extraction of the Hadiths in the (*Ihya'*): 'Ibn As-Salah says: 'I did not find a reliable source for it.' I said: 'It is only known from a saying of=

who are closely related to you because relatives have the same characteristics in their make-up and they have the same blood. As for those who are not related, they have different characteristics and different blood, so the progeny is stronger. This is what an Arab poet understood of this matter when he said⁽¹⁾:

Be wary of the one who has many worries
Sons marrying the daughters of the paternal uncle
There is no escape from weakness and illness
By the father, even if you feed it, it will not grow

They had indeed noticed the weakness of progeny in families that married their children to close relatives, and they commended inter-distance. The poet said:

A boy was not born of a close daughter of an uncle
So that he is scrawny and may make the descendants of the relatives scrawny⁽²⁾

The other distances himself from his uncle's daughter with regards to marriage, despite his love for her, and he says:

I have gone beyond the uncle's daughter although she is beloved
Fearing that because of me her descendants would be scrawny

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And no female conceives nor does she give birth except with His knowledge.' (*Fussilat*: 47) The process of the female becoming pregnant is done by means of the male and female coming together under the shade of the law and the way of Allah. The scholars have spoken at length on the issue of women being pregnant. Is it her responsibility or the man's? We have recently heard from studies that have taken place that the man is the one who is responsible for the male or female chromosome. As for the woman, she only carries the egg that will become either one or the other.

= 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* that he said to the people of Sa'ib: "You have weakened, so marry distinguished people." *Related by Ibrahim Al-Harbi in (Gharib Al-Hadith)*. Ash-Shawkani says in (*Al-Fawa'id Al-Majmu'ah*) p.131: 'It is not traceable in ascending order of narrators back to the Prophet [*marfu'*].

(1) These were mentioned by Abu Hayyan At-Tawhidi in his book (*Al-Imta' Al-Mu'anicah*), and he did not attribute them to anyone. Also see (*Muhadarat Al-Adba'i*), by Ar-Raghib Al-Asfahani.

(2) This verse belongs to An-Nabigha Adh-Dhubyani.

It is amazing that ancient Arab women were aware of what modern science is discovering today, and that they had insight and understanding with regards to this issue. Husbands would get angry with Arab women that only gave birth to daughters, and they would leave and marry someone else so that she could produce a son. The first wife would be abandoned, and she would say the following lines of poetry⁽¹⁾:

Why does the father of Hamza not come to us
 Angry because we only give birth to daughters
 By Allah, this matter is not in our hands
 We are like the earth for the one who plants the seeds
 We give them the like of which we are given.

It is amazing that the Bedouins spoke about what modern science is arriving at in the twentieth century, and the True Lord *Glorified is He* desired to affirm for us a sound disposition that is far removed from passion and may therefore attain the realities of the universe. The correct opinion does not join together with the desire of the ego. This is why they say that the plague of opinion is desire. With regards to this, we have what has been narrated from 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* that the Quran would be revealed in accordance with his opinion, and that is only because of the soundness of his disposition.

Allah says a woman does not: 'give birth except with His knowledge.' (*Fussilat*: 47) These are the stages that the woman goes through. First of all, she gets married and becomes pregnant. Then she gives birth. These are all stages in a healthy woman. He *Glorified is He* did not mention what happens when something goes wrong during pregnancy. A mother may get pregnant but then have a miscarriage.

One of the miraculous things that accompanies the process of birth is that the blood that usually comes out during menstruation changes, when the woman

(1) These verses are mentioned with a different wording by Ibn 'Abd Rabihi Al-Andalusi in (*Al- 'Aqd Al-Farid*), in the chapter on what they say regarding rarities and anecdotes:
 Why does the father of Hamza not come to us
 Under the shelter of the house in which he keeps us
 He is angry that we only give birth to daughters
 But we only take what we are given

becomes pregnant, to nourishment for the embryo, as if this blood is not from her provision but rather from the provision of her child if she is able to get pregnant. If she is not able to get pregnant, it continues to come out without anyone benefitting from it.

It is amazing that this blood is sufficient for one embryo, and it is also sufficient for two or three, and even more. We just heard recently of a woman who gave birth to seven; despite that, she was in good health (i.e. her weight did not decrease at all). It is as if the Creator is reminding us not to worry about food and provisions. Look at what he did for you when you were in the wombs of your mothers. Each one of you had your provision. He did not overlook it and He did not make a mistake.

The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* spoke the truth when he said: ‘The food of one person is enough for two, and the food of two people is enough for three.’⁽¹⁾

Despite the advancement of science, they are still not able to decisively determine the time of birth, and this exact moment is to remain in the knowledge of Allah *Glorified is He*. Why? Because we know the duration of the pregnancy, but we do not exactly know when the zygote clings on to the womb. This is why obstetricians always say that the birth will take place between these days and these days.

Therefore, the moment of birth resembles, in terms of its secrecy, the moment of death. No one but Allah knows it. The meaning of ‘knows it’ is that He knows all the events and phenomena that surround it.

After giving birth the woman becomes both a wet nurse and a dry nurse, and the Creator *Glorified is He* causes the sustenance of her child to flow from her without taking anything away from her sustenance because Allah continues to provide for her, and something is deficient if it is taken from without any maintenance.

Then He *Glorified is He* says: ‘And no aged person is granted [additional] life nor is his life span lessened but that it is in a register.’ (*Fatir*: 11)

(1) Related by Ahmad in his (*Musnad*) (2/407) from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra, and related by Muslim in his (*Sahih*) (2059) in the Book of Drinks, and Ibn Majah in his (*Sunnan*) (3254) from the Hadith of Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah

This is one of the topics that the orientalist object to because of their ignorance of the Arabic language and its methods. They say: 'How can one's life actually be prolonged, for one hundred years, for example, but then his life span is decreased?' We say that they are excused because they do not know that in the language a pronoun can refer back to the pronoun.

You say, for example: 'I met so-and-so and I honoured him'. 'Him' refers to this so-and-so. You say: 'I gave charity with a *dirham* and a half of it.' Does this mean that you gave charity with one *dirham*, and then went back a second time and halved it? No. The meaning is that you gave charity with a *dirham* and half a *dirham* like it. Sometimes the pronoun refers back to the thing itself, and sometimes it refers back to something like it, as in: 'I gave charity with a *dirham* and a half of it'.

Man has an essence and he has attributes. His essence is the body of his creation, and his attributes are the descriptions that happen to the essence. Him having his life prolonged means that he will reach old age, and as such the pronoun refers back to something like the first thing, or part of something like the first thing. The reference of the pronoun in 'nor is his life span lessened,' is correct. If someone lives to be one hundred years old then we can not kill him when he is twenty years old, for example.

Hence, you must return the pronoun back to the essence and not the attribute, and none that is long-lived has his days lengthened; neither his life span is lessened. Longevity of life cannot be affirmed for the essence unless it is by the permission of Allah. The meaning is similar to: 'I gave charity with a *dirham* and a half of it'.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* told us about longevity when he spoke about the Jews: 'And they claim, "None shall ever enter paradise unless he be a Jew" – or, "a Christian."' (*al-Baqara*: 111) And they say: 'The fire will most certainly not touch us for more than a limited number of days.' (*al-Baqara*: 80)

Allah has refuted them: If you have guaranteed for yourselves the paradise, and no-one is going to take it from you, then desire death which will lead you to it: 'Say, [O Muhammad], "If the home of the Hereafter with Allah is for you alone and not the [other] people, then wish for death, if you should be truthful."' (*al-Baqara*: 94) Then Allah *Glorified is He* judges against them:

‘But they will never wish for it, ever, because of what their hands have put forth. And Allah is Knowing of the wrongdoers. And you will surely find them the greediest of people for life - [even] more than those who associate others with Allah. One of them wishes that he could be granted life a thousand years, but it would not remove him in the least from the [coming] punishment that he should be granted life. And Allah is seeing of what they do.’ (*al-Baqara*: 95-96)

His saying: ‘but that it is in a register’ means the Preserved Tablet because everything that happens, every increase, and decrease in our lifetimes and in the periods of pregnancy and childbirth are recorded in the Preserved Tablet.

‘Indeed, that for Allah is easy.’ Everything that is hard for you to understand is simple and easy for Allah *Glorified is He*. Have you not seen how Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* called on Allah to grant him a righteous son who would inherit prophethood after him, despite the fact that he was too old in years and his wife was barren? Any progeny that comes at that age is special if the wife is barren, but if it is by Allah’s laws then the matter is easy and facilitated.

Read: ‘And indeed, I fear the successors after me, and my wife has been barren, so give me from Yourself an heir Who will inherit me and inherit from the family of Ya’qub (Jacob). And make him, my Lord, pleasing [to You].’ [He was told], “O Zakaryya, indeed We give you good tidings of a boy whose name will be John. We have not assigned to any before [this] name.” He said, “My Lord, how will I have a boy when my wife has been barren and I have reached extreme old age?” [An angel] said, “Thus [it will be]; your Lord says, ‘It is easy for Me, for I created you before, while you were nothing.’” (*Maryam*: 5-9)

Therefore, do not compare the issue to our capabilities and our human laws because this action is attributed to Allah and not to human beings.

Likewise, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when Pharaoh and his army pursued him until they had surrounded him and tightened their grip on him such that the followers of Musa said: ‘Behold, we are to be overtaken’ (*ash-Shu’ara*: 61). And why not are they overtaken, with the sea in front of them and Pharaoh’s army behind them? Musa *peace be upon him* spoke as one who trusts in his Lord and His Unlimited Power: ‘He replied: “No, indeed!”’ (*ash-Shu’ara*: 62) He meant: They will not overtake us. He said this because of the sum of trust he had in Allah: ‘with me is my Lord; He will guide me.’

(*ash-Shu'ara'*: 62) Then the relief came instantly: 'Then We inspired to Musa, "Strike with your staff the sea," and it parted, and each portion was like a great towering mountain.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 63)

Musa *peace be upon him* saw a dry path splitting the sea, and he and his people crossed until they reached the other side. He wanted to strike the sea another time so that it would return to its fluid state, and prevent Pharaoh from crossing, but His Lord forbade him, as the miracle had not yet been completed and there was still something left. Allah *Glorified is He* is able to save and destroy with the same thing, and the dry path remained dry so that Pharaoh would be deceived by it. He began to cross it in order to catch up with Musa. When the last of Pharaoh's army treaded on the path, Allah covered them with water, returned (the sea) to its fluidity and Pharaoh and his army were drowned. This is His Absolute Power that has no limits, and it is not subjected to causes.

Likewise, by reflecting on the issue of creation and multiplication, you find that the mankind has come from a male and a female, but logical and rational distribution in this matter do not prevent Allah's Power from bringing about creation at any stage. The Creator *Glorified is He* created Adam *peace be upon him* without a father and without a mother. He then created Eve from a father but not a mother, and he created 'Isa *peace be upon him* from a mother but not a father. Therefore, we say that the matter is easy and simple for Allah, even though you may think it is difficult.

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْبَحْرَانِ هَذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ سَائِغٌ شَرَابُهُ، وَهَذَا مِلْحٌ أُجَاجٌ وَمِنْ كُلٍّ تَأْكُلُونَ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُونَ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا وَتَرَى الْفَلَاكَ فِيهِ مَوَازِرَ لَبَنَعًا مِنْ فُضْلِهِ، وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

The two bodies of water are not alike – one is palatable, sweet, and pleasant to drink, the other salty and bitter – yet from each you eat fresh fish and extract ornaments to wear, and in each you see the ships ploughing their course so that you may seek Allah's bounty and be grateful [12] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 12)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to make it easy for us to understand this issue rationally and in a value-related sense, so He presents it to us in a

palpable, imaginable way: ‘And not alike are the two bodies of water.’ Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to us: as there are palpable things that are not like other things in terms of their palpability, there are also value-related things that are unlike anything else.

The sea is known; it is the vast expanse composed of salty water, and rivers can also be called Sea in most cases. The river contains fresh water, so they are different and not alike. ‘One is fresh and sweet’ and ‘one is salty and bitter.’ This one is fresh and that one is salty and ‘fresh’ is described as being: ‘sweet, palatable for drinking,’ and passes through the throat easily and comfortably. ‘Salty’ is described as ‘salty and bitter.’

Between the fresh and the salty are some of the wonders of creation, for we find in both of them, for example, fish that we eat, and we do not distinguish between freshwater fish and saltwater fish. This is because Allah has prepared the living being to take his life’s essentials from the water, and leave aside what he does not want. Another example is a tree that you plant. It takes from the earth the necessary elements and discards what it does not need.

In the same soil, you can grow, for example, capsicum tree and sugar cane; both plants are nourished by the same elements and irrigated by the same water, but the food that they each produce is completely different. As He *Glorified is He* said: ‘And within the land are neighbouring plots and gardens of grapevines and crops and palm trees, [growing] several from a root or otherwise, watered with one water; but We make some of them exceed others in [quality of] fruit.’ (*ar-Ra‘d*: 4)

This is a natural disposition and characteristic that Allah has made in all living beings; that they only take the nourishment that they need. When the scientists want to make it easier for us to understand the process by which plants are nourished they say: ‘they rely on the particularity of the small hair-like tubes, and the small root hairs absorb the water and the food from the soil; this particularity transmits it to the trunk and the leaves. But they have not realized that the hair-like tubes absorb the water without discrimination and without differentiation from one element to another, and without selecting one substance over another. Thus, it is not the particularity of the small hairs but only the divine and natural characteristic that Allah has placed in living beings.

Natural issues happen to man, as do emotional and mental issues. Legislation has no say regarding emotional issues such as love and hate because man has no control over them. Love whom you will and hate whom you will, but on the condition that love and hatred do not push you beyond being just and toward oppression and transgression, as He *Glorified is He* said: 'and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 8)

Legislation also has no say regarding natural issues, as hunger and thirst, for example, are natural impulses that a person knows by himself and from experience. You do not teach your child hunger and thirst. He knows it himself when he feels hungry and when he feels thirsty.

For this reason, it is strange that we hear people calling for boys and girls to be educated in schools about sexual matters, and that they want to have a new subject called 'sex Education' that can be taught to children from a young age. We say: Glory be to Allah that He allowed small children to learn natural impulses. Natural impulses are not taught, but man comes to know them at their appropriate time.

It is from the wonders of creation that freshwater does not mix with saltwater, as He *Glorified is He* said: 'Between them is a barrier [so] neither of them transgresses.' (*ar-Rahman*: 20) This is an evidence of a miracle because we always find that the level of saltwater in the seas and large oceans is less than the level of water in the rivers, and if the opposite were the case the saltwater would cover the rivers and the dry land.

This means that the plants would die and the soil would be ruined. This is why the Creator's wisdom willed for the level of water in the rivers to be higher, and that (the rivers) would have outlets into the sea so that the surplus water can be disposed of.

The Creator *Glorified is He* has wisdom behind the freshwater being suitable for drinking, watering plants and quenching thirst. As for saltwater, Allah is preserving it according to its salt content so that it does not spoil or putrefy. This is because the seas and oceans are the storehouses for fresh water and from them the rainwater evaporates which the rivers flow with, and you notice that the level of salt differs according to the nature of a place. For example, you

find that water in the Baltic Sea has the lowest salt content because it is an outlet for a number of rivers and it is located in a region where there is a lot of rain. All of this contributes to the low salt content.

As for the Dead Sea, for example, it has the highest salt content of any sea, so much so that fish do not live in it. The reason is that no rivers flow into it, and it is located in a dry region that receives little rain. Thus, a lot of water evaporates from it. As for the remaining water that gathers in the seas and oceans, it has almost the same level of saltiness.

We have already mentioned the wisdom behind the surface area of the saltwater being so vast in the seas and oceans, and we said: the vastness of the surface of the water increases the rate of evaporation so there can be an abundance of suitable freshwater for irrigation and drinking. Our example of this process is that if you leave a glass of water on a desk for a month you would return and find that it is more or less how you left it. However, if you spilled it on the floor of the room it would dry before you leave. Why? Because you have expanded the surface area that is necessary for evaporation.

Allah has expanded the surface of saltwater in order to give us enough rain to continue our lives. Also, saltwater is not mixed when it comes into contact with fresh water because it is the source of its existence. This is why a poet ⁽¹⁾ said in praise:

I am guided to His noble gathering and I am
Only guided to it because of what I have gained from His blessings
Like the sea that is rained upon by the clouds and it (the sea) sea has
No preference over them (the clouds) because it is from their water

It is known that water has a recognized cycle in existence. Allah *Glorified is He* says regarding it: ‘By those [winds] scattering [dust] dispersing. And those [clouds] carrying a load [of water] And those [ships] sailing with ease.’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 1-3)

(1) These two verses are from the saying of Hibat Allah Al-Astarlabi, and they were mentioned to him by Ibn Ma‘sum in his book (*Salafat al-‘Asr fi Mahasin Ash-Shu‘ara‘ bi kuli Misr*)

The water that Allah has created in the universe is as it is and it does not increase or decrease. Whatever waterman consumes, for example, exits from him in the form of excrement, urine, sweat etc., and the proportion of water in his body remains at 90% of his weight, and it is absorbed by the earth after he dies. The same can be said of plants and animals, as there is a recognized and witnessed cycle. Life is also a cycle, for when we say to you: 'Indeed, Allah is able to repeat it' then take that which you witness as evidence for the veracity of that which is absent.

His saying: 'And from each,' is referring to the freshwater and the saltwater. 'You eat tender meat' refers to fish which is found in freshwater as it is found in saltwater. It is the same food, and you will not find, for example, that the fish in saltwater is salty like the flathead mullet, for example, or sardines. This is because living things only absorb what they need, and they leave the other elements alone.

The term: 'tender meat' is an indication that fish should be eaten whilst fresh and tender. If it becomes dry and its freshness dissipates then do not eat it. Jerked meat has become popular amongst the Arabs, in which they dry the meat of livestock in the sun and then cut it into strips so that it lasts longer. This is one of the ways of preserving meat that is suited to the meat of livestock. As for the meat of fish, it is ruined if it is no longer: 'tender meat.'

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions another blessing that comes from the sea: 'and extract ornaments which you wear.' Ornaments are what one uses to beautify oneself, such as pearls and corals and other gems that come from the sea. This ornamentation applies to both men and women, as opposed to the ornamentation of gold which is impermissible for men. Men can ornament themselves with what they want from the sea, as nothing from it has been made impermissible for them. Even the ornamentation of gold for women, for who does a woman ornament herself for? She does so for the husband.

'And you see the ships ploughing through [them].' Ships they split the sea on fishing trips and other travels. Here is one of the aspects of the miraculous nature of the Quran. The Quran first of all addresses the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and then it addresses his nation by means of his speech, although the Prophet Muhammad had neither travelled by sea nor seen one.

When the Quran says: ‘And to Him belong the ships [with sails] elevated in the sea like mountains.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 24) We say: ‘And when did these huge ocean liners appear that can be described in such a manner? They have only appeared in modern times. Before modern times there were only the normal, primitive ships. Who informed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of this current advancement that is taking place in the manufacturing of ships, such that you are made to imagine that it is a city moving on the waves of the sea.’

His saying ‘that you might seek of His bounty’ means: so that you may seek Allah’s provision and His bounty in the movement of the ships, whether it is fishing or travelling. ‘And perhaps you will be grateful.’ The meaning is that perhaps, after all these blessings, you will receive them with gratitude, and this is an indication that only a minority are grateful.

After this, the verses move to address another phenomenon of the universe:

يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ
كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَالَّذِينَ
تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِنْ قِطْمِيرٍ ﴿١٣﴾

He makes the night merge into the day and the day into the night; He has subjected the sun and the moon – each runs for an appointed term. Such is Allah your Lord: all control belongs to Him. Those you invoke beside Him do not even control the skin of a date stone [13] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 13)

It is true that the day and the night are sometimes of equal length, but the night is longer in the winter and it takes a portion away from the day. The day is longer in the summer and it takes a portion away from the night. In short, an increase in either of them leads to a decrease in the other, and this is the meaning of ‘He causes the night to enter the day, and He causes the day to enter the night.’ The phenomenon of the night being inserted into the day and the day being inserted into the night is the result of the earth being tilted on its axis. The True Lord *Glorified is He* as He has distributed water and preserved it in the vast seas, has also distributed temperature. If the earth was not tilting on

its axis then the sun would burn the side of the earth that was facing it, whilst the other side would freeze.

One of the wonders of creation is that whether man lives at the North Pole or the South Pole his body temperature is 37 degrees, just as it would be if he were living at the equator. This is because the human body has been constructed in such a way so as to maintain its normal temperature regardless of where it is. Indeed, each organ maintains its own normal temperature despite all the organs being in the same body, and the heat spreads and reaches everywhere.

It is amazing that the liver can only carry out its natural function at a temperature of 40 degrees, and the temperature of the eye never goes above 7 degrees. Who prevents the liver's heat from spreading to the rest of the body, and reaching the eye, for example? Indeed, He is the Creator: 'Who created and proportioned. And who destined and [then] guided.' (*al-A'la*: 2-3)

And His saying: 'and has subjected the sun and the moon,' (*Fatir*: 13) means that He has subdued them for the benefit of man, and made them serve him without him having any power over them and without any volition from him. The sun and the moon are two signs in the general structure of the universe, and he can do nothing about them. If he was able to, they would be ruined and in chaos. Allah *Glorified is He* spoke the truth when He said: 'But if the Truth had followed their inclinations, the heavens, and the earth and whoever is in them would have been ruined.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 71)

If you said: 'Man ruining the earth is something possible, so how would he ruin the heavens?' They said: 'did people not desire for the sky to fall on them by saying: 'Or you make the heaven fall upon us in fragments as you have claimed.' (*al-Isra*': 92) If the truth followed the desires of these people the life of this world would have been ruined.

This issue was debated by the philosophical school in Germany with another school. It had two contradicting opinions despite being in the same era. Each one of them took their opinion to be an evidence for atheism and stating that there was no God, and this is strange. One of them says: 'There are no irregularities in the world. It functions according to regular laws that are similar to mechanics. If there was a creator, a God for this universe, the creation would be at variance and there would be irregularities in it.' The other says: 'The universe does not

function according to a fixed order. There are irregularities in creation, based on the evidence that some people are born handicapped, and if the world had a God, the creation would be one and equal with no variance in it.'

Glory be to Allah! Either way they desire atheism and their natural disposition is to reject the existence of Allah.

We say to these people: 'Come and we will lead you to that which is correct and to a common word. O you who desire irregularity in things as evidence for the existence of an all-powerful god, then you have your evidence. O you who desire stability in things as evidence for the existence of a wise God, then you have your evidence. But they have a distorted way of looking at things. How?

The fixed order that has no irregularity in it is found in the upper universe which functions monotonously and orderly without ever becoming unbalanced. The entire movement of the sun, the moon, the stars, and the other celestial bodies function according to one system that does not become disordered, and now we are able, for example, to determine the moment of a solar eclipse and a lunar eclipse, and we actually witness them at their exact time.

Therefore, if you desire stability as evidence then take it from the higher celestial bodies because they must be established upon a fixed order that has no irregularities in it. If not, the entire universe would be in chaos.

If you desire irregularities then you can see them in the particulars because the irregularities of the particulars do not affect the general order of the universe. That is why you see that this person is in perfect health, this person is blind, this person is one-eyed and so forth. Stability is in its place for wisdom and irregularities are in their place for wisdom. This and that are two evidences for the existence of the God Who is the Creator and the fully Capable.

His saying 'each running [its course] for a specified term,' (*Fatir*: 13) means that both the sun and the moon are circulating until a known time in which they will be destroyed and come to an end. 'That is Allah, your Lord; to Him belongs sovereignty,' (*Fatir*: 13) referring to the sensory world that is witnessed by you. As for that which you do not see from the kingdom, then that is the world of the supreme, unseen by you and your senses cannot comprehend it.

This is why, when Abraham *peace be upon him* was successful in his test, as Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'And [mention, O Muhammad], when Ibrahim was

tried by his Lord with commands and he fulfilled them.' (*al-Baqara*: 124) He gave him a great rank and He showed him the 'world of the supreme' that had not been seen by anyone else, and He *Glorified is He* said: 'And thus did We show Abraham the realm of the heavens and the earth.' (*al-An'am*: 75) What comes from the world of the witnessed kingdom has its origin in the world of the world of the supreme which we do not comprehend.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* points out this world in His saying: 'O you who have believed, if you fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion.' (*al-Anfal*: 29) How can this be when we are not conscious of Allah unless we use the standard by which to discern the true from the false, and it is the Quran? So what is the meaning of 'He will grant you a criterion'? They say: 'It is that Allah will show you the world of the supreme of the heavens and the earth.

And His saying: 'And those whom you invoke other than Him do not possess [as much as] the membrane of a date seed' (*Fatir*: 15) means that if it was the True Lord who created this and that for you and subjugated the sun and the moon for you, then your claimed, alleged gods 'do not possess [as much as] the membrane of a date seed' but what is the membrane of a date seed?

The one who reflects on the Quran will find that it pays a great deal of attention to the date palm, and the first people it addresses are the Arabs; they are the first to be presented with Islam and to be called to it, and the Quran addresses them in a manner that is appropriate to them. It mentions to them examples from their own environment, and the date palm is well known in the Arab environment and it has a rank in our religion, so much so that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is related to have said: 'Honour your paternal aunt, the date palm.'⁽¹⁾

This statement, even if it cannot be authentically traced back to the Messenger of Allah, was not made by someone out of a vacuum. There is no doubt that this statement has an origin and that there is a connection between man and the date palm.

(1) The completion of the Hadith is: "for indeed it was created from the leftover clay of your father Adam." Related by As-Suyuti in (*Ad-Durar Al-Muntathira*) (p.107) Hadith (97) who attributed it to Abu Ya'la and Abu Na'im from Ibn 'Abbas, and he said it was weak. Ibn Al-Qayyim says in (*Zad Al-Ma'ad*) (2/194): 'In its chain of narrations there is some difference of opinion. Also see (*Kashf Al-Khafa*) 1/195).

There is an authentic statement from the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in which he said to His companions: ‘Indeed there is a tree whose leaves do not fall.’⁽¹⁾

When 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with them* heard this he said to his father: ‘It has occurred to me that it is the date palm because its leaves do not fall and it resembles the believer because everything in it is beneficial.’ 'Umar made haste to the prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, indeed my son 'Abdullah says that the tree you mention is the date palm.’ He said: ‘He has spoken the truth.’ 'Umar said: ‘By Allah, I could not be happier if I had red camels,’ meaning that he rejoiced because his son⁽²⁾ had understood what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had said.

The scholars have tried to make it easier for us to understand this reality and establish the link between man and the date palm. Maybe it is the case that it was created from the leftover clay of Adam. They said: ‘The pollen of the date palm, through which the pollination takes place, has the same smell as man’s semen’, and this gives weight to the veracity of whoever said that the (date palm) is our paternal aunt.

There are many wonders and secrets in the date palm being created this way, but it suffices to mention that everything in it is beneficial and nothing from it is discarded. Allah has made it to be used as an example and a lesson. When Allah addressed the Arabs about the crescent, He said: ‘And the moon - We have determined for it phases, until it returns [appearing] like the old date stalk.’ (*Ya Sin*: 39)

The date stalk is the cluster that carries the dates when they dry and become curved and bent, so they (Arabs) are made to understand that which is high above by mentioning that which is below and known to them.

(1) Related by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (61) and its completion is: “and it is like the Muslim. Tell me what it is.” The people thought about the trees of the desert. ‘Abdullah ibn 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with them* said: ‘It occurred to me that it was the date palm but I felt shy.’ The people said; ‘Tell us what it is O Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*.’ He said: ‘It is the date palm.’”

(2) This narration is found in the *Sahih* of Al-Bukhari (121) and it adds that Ibn 'Umar said: ‘I told my father what had occurred to me and he said: “If you had said it, this would have been dearer to me than possessing this or that.”’

Take the example of the date stone. It is the most insignificant thing there is, except for the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* ennobled it when He mentioned three parts of it as examples for clarification. He mentioned the husk of the date stone in the verse that we have here: 'do not possess [as much as] the membrane of a date seed' and it is the thin membrane that covers the stone. Something similar would be the white substance that is between an egg and its shell.

The tiny spot on the date pit is mentioned in His saying: 'those will enter paradise and will not be wronged, [even as much as] the speck on a date seed.' (*an-Nisa'*: 124) This speck is a small hollow, or a tiny spot on the surface of the stone.

The wick (*fatil*) is mentioned in His saying: 'Say, The enjoyment of this world is little, and the Hereafter is better for he who fears Allah. And injustice will not be done to you, [even] as much as a thread [inside a date seed].' (*an-Nisa'*: 77) These three parts are used as examples for that which is simple and absolutely tiny.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

إِنْ تَدْعُوهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوا دُعَاءَكُمْ وَلَوْ سَمِعُوا مَا اسْتَجَابُوا لَكُمْ
وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكْفُرُونَ بَشِرِكِكُمْ وَلَا يُنَبِّئُكَ مِثْلُ خَيْرٍ ﴿١٤﴾

If you call them they cannot hear you; if they could hear, they could not answer you; on the Day of Resurrection they will disown your idolatry. None can inform you [Prophet] like the One who is all aware [14] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 14)

His saying 'If you invoke them' refers to worship because each of them would stand in front of their own idol and invoke it, beseech it and talk to it etc. But this is so ridiculous because this rock does not hear, so invoking it is pointless, let alone being an act of disbelief. The meaning of 'they do not hear your supplication' is the deities that do not comprehend or hear, like trees, rocks and so forth.

But why do the disbelievers worship idols, for example, when they know that they are rocks they chiselled with their own hands, and they can see a gust of wind knocking over their object of worship; tossing it on the ground and

breaking its arms. Then they need to repair it. It is very strange to see idols worshipped instead of Allah but the reason is the innate disposition towards religion that is found in the human soul.

Every human being, by nature, loves religiosity, and the bane of religiosity is that it has requirements, so what will prevent man from going towards some form of religiosity in order to satisfy this innate disposition, despite the fact that there are no requirements? This is how idols are worshipped, and stars and trees are worshipped and taken as gods.

The meaning of worship is that the worshipper obeys the command of the one he worships, and refrains from that which he has prohibited. If there is no command and no prohibition then the worship is disreputable and false because you cannot worship a deity without a method. If that is not the case, then what has this deity commanded them and what has it forbade them? What has it prepared for the one who worships it? What has it prepared for the one who disbelieves in it?

His saying: ‘and if they heard.’ Supposing that they were worshipping a human being that could hear them ‘they would not respond to you,’ (*Fatir*: 14) meaning: they would not agree to you worshipping them and they would refuse to be a deity. An example would be those who worship Jesus *peace be upon him* instead of Allah.

A poet dealt with this matter when he imagined the cave of Thawr being jealous of the cave of Hira’ because the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* had made it a place for seclusion and devotion and in it the first revelation came down. When the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* dismounted in the cave of Thawr during his migration, Thawr rejoiced, as now things were even. Hira’ was for the mission of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and Thawr was for his migration, which was the start of the call.

A poet⁽¹⁾ says:

How we envied Hira’ when you saw

The Trustworthy Spirit coming to you with lights

(1) From the poetry of Ash-Sh'arawi, *may God be pleased with him*.

Thus Hira' and Thawr became equal
With them I shall intercede for the nation of stones
They worshipped us and we are more devoted to Allah
Than those who stand in the early hours of the morning
They took our silence as evidence against us
Take us to them as fuel for the Fire
You harvested ignorance as you harvested it
Against the Son of Mary and the disciples
For the excesses that are its reward and the excesses that are in it
Can be saved by the mercy of the All-Forgiving

The stone itself refuses to be worshipped instead of Allah. It knows the reality of the oneness of Allah, and it falls down in glorification of Him. What does that make you think of human beings?

This is why, when we stand on the Day of Resurrection, amongst the wonders we will see will be the arguments and disputes between the worshipper and the worshipped, the follower and the followed. He says: '[And they should consider that] when those who have been followed disassociate themselves from those who followed [them], and they [all] see the punishment, and cut off from them are the ties [of relationship].' (*al-Baqara*: 166) He quotes those who have gone astray: 'And those who disbelieved will [then] say, "Our Lord, show us those who misled us of the jinn and men [so] we may put them under our feet that they will be among the lowest."' (*Fussilat*: 29)

Here He *Glorified is He* says: 'And on the Day of Resurrection they will deny your association.' (*Fatir*: 14) Those that you have turned to in worship and taken as gods will declare themselves innocent of you and your idolatry. 'And none can inform you like [one] Acquainted [with all matters].' That is, the knower of the secrets of things, as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to you: 'I am informing you of what will happen in the future, so take from My truthfulness regarding what has already happened as proof of My truthfulness regarding what is yet to come. Take from My truthfulness regarding what you see as proof of my truthfulness regarding what you don not see.

يَتَأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمْ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ﴿١٥﴾
 إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَأْتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ﴿١٦﴾ وَمَا ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِعَزِيزٍ ﴿١٧﴾

People, it is you who stand in need of Allah – Allah needs nothing and is worthy of all praise [15] If He wills, He can do away with you and bring in a new creation [16] That is not difficult for Allah [17] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 15 - 17)

The address in ‘O mankind!’ is a general address for all of mankind, the believer and the disbeliever, the obedient and the disobedient. ‘you are those in need of Allah, while Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy.’ This is the reality that Allah uses to humiliate arrogant people who refuse to believe in Him and rebel against Allah’s way. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to them: ‘As long as you accustom yourselves to rebellion then rebel against poverty if I impoverish you, or against sickness if it strikes you. Rebel against death when your time has come’ you are therefore subjugated to the Lordship of Allah and you cannot escape from it.

‘While Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy,’ He stands in an absolute self-sufficiency, and the meaning of ‘Praiseworthy’ is the One who is praised much. A wealthy person is not praised unless he gives, and his giving is abundant. The wealthy person who is miserly is not praised but in fact he is rebuked.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* reminds them of another reality that is hidden from them: ‘If He wills, He can do away with you and bring forth a new creation.’ As he said in another place: ‘And if you turn away, He will replace you with another people; then they will not be the likes of you.’ (*Muhammad*: 38) Recreating mankind or coming with a new creation is something easy for Allah: ‘nor is this difficult for Allah.’ (*Fatir*: 17) But the True Lord *Glorified is He* does want to come with a creation that is obedient, and that believes in Him even though they are able to disbelieve and they have absolute choice. This choice is a point of greatness in Allah’s religion.

Bringing about a new creation is something that is easy and effortless for Allah; *Glorified is He* because He does not create according to a procedure. He just creates with “‘Be!’” and it is’. This is from Allah *Glorified is He* and it does not take time.

If you wanted to reflect deeply into the meaning of His statement: ‘His command is only when He intends a thing that He says to it, “Be,” and it is,” (Ya Sin: 82) you will find that a thing in reality is in fact present, but in the world of the unseen and the command (‘Be!’ and it is) it is for Him to make it manifest to us in the material world. This is why, when a knowledgeable person was asked, he said: ‘He reveals some things and He hides other things.’

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ۚ وَإِن تَدْعُ مُثْقَلَةٌ إِلَىٰ جَمِلِهَا لَا يَحْمِلُ مِنْهُ شَيْءٌ وَلَوْ
كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ ۖ إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ
وَمَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَتَزَكَّىٰ لِنَفْسِهِ ۚ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٨﴾

No burdened soul will bear the burden of another: even if a heavily laden soul should cry for help, none of its load will be carried, not even by a close relative. But you [Prophet] can only warn those who fear their Lord, though they cannot see Him, and keep up the prayer – whoever purifies himself does so for his own benefit — everything returns to Allah [18]
(The Quran, *Fatir*: 18)

The meaning of ‘And no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another’ is that no soul shall carry the sins of another soul. This is because it is weighed down with its own burden. The burden is a heavy load that does not manifest itself, and we have His saying regarding the matter of revelation: ‘And We removed from you your burden. Which had weighed upon your back’ (*ash-Sharh*: 2-3) which means that the meeting between the angelic realm and the human realm tired you.

This is why the Prophet’s forehead used to sweat after meeting Angel Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*. He said by way of illustrating this meeting: ‘He pressed me until I could no longer bear it,’⁽¹⁾ and he returned to his family saying: ‘Wrap me up! Wrap me up! Cover me! Cover me!’ Despite this, during cessation of the divine revelation, he missed it and longed for it to return

(1) It was narrated in a long Hadith by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (vol. 3) in the Book of Bid’ Al-Wahy (Beginning of Revelation) on the authority of ‘Aisha Allah be pleased with her.

because he had tasted its sweetness. The sweetness of something makes you forget whatever difficulty you have had to endure in order to achieve it.

The meaning of no soul taking on the burdens and sins of another soul has been explained to us by the True Lord in His saying: ‘On a Day when everyone will [want to] flee from his brother, and from his mother and father, and from his spouse and his children; on that Day, to every one of them will his own state be of sufficient concern.’ (*Abasa*: 34-37) Everyone shall be wholly absorbed in their own concerns, confined within their own actions. There is no time for courtesy. The father will say to his son: ‘My dear son! My burden is heavy. Relieve me of some of it.’ And the son will say: ‘my burden is enough, O father.’

It is likewise here: ‘And no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another...’ (*Fatir*: 18). A soul weighed down with misdeeds will ask another soul to carry some of its sins, but this is impossible: ‘...nothing of it will be carried, even if he should be a close relative...’ (*Fatir*: 18). Even if this plea were to be made to the people closest to this soul, they would not answer and they would not carry anything. How can a burdened soul carry the burden of another soul when it is preoccupied with its own load?

Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* refutes the assertion of the disbelievers that they would carry the misdeeds of their followers. He *the Exalted* says: ‘And those who disbelieve say to those who believe, “Follow our way, and we will carry your sins.” But they will not carry anything of their sins. Indeed, they are liars. But they will surely carry their [own] burdens and [other] burdens along with their burdens, and they will surely be questioned on the Day of Resurrection about what they used to invent.’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 12-13) This issue is clear. Every soul (on that Day) shall be engrossed in its own concerns: ‘[On the Day of Judgment] every soul is held in pledge for its deeds.’ (*al-Muddaththir*: 38) the human in the life of this world is bound either by a family relationship that entails obligation, or by acquaintances and friends, or by a source of assistance that he seeks help from if he does not have any relatives or friends. But on the Day of Resurrection all these bonds shall be broken because the situation on that day will not allow for any courtesies and sacrifices.

When the Mother of the Believers, 'Aishah *Allah be pleased with her* heard our Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* telling people about the Day of Resurrection and warning how the sun would draw close to the heads, and the people would be standing naked, she became upset and asked the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'How can the people be standing naked, looking at one another?' The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* responded to her by saying that every person would be too engrossed in his own affairs, and the situation on that Day would be too grave to allow any looking at the nakedness of others.⁽¹⁾

Then Allah says addressing His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: '...You can only warn those who fear their Lord unseen...' (*Fatir*: 18), meaning: Your warning them, O Muhammad, and your admonishing them will only benefit those who fear their Lord although they cannot see Him and He is beyond their perception. As for the others, they have oppressed their own souls by depriving them from the abundant goodness that Allah has intended for them. They have wronged their own souls when they allowed the life of this world to delude them with its fleeting joys and to distract them from the eternal bliss of the Hereafter.

The Arabic word *indhar* means an early warning of evil to be able to protect oneself from it. The opportunity is favourable before it suddenly attacks. For example, when you want to encourage your child to study and to warn him about carelessness that will lead to failure, you do not say this to him the night before the exam. You only do so when there is enough time for him to put things in order, and rectify whatever carelessness or laziness he has.

Warning and evoking fear are of no use unless it is with someone who believes in that which you are telling him to fear and be in awe of. When Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was warning about the punishment of the Hereafter, such warnings only benefited those who believed in Allah and the Resurrection.

(1) Narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (vol. 2, p. 53) on the authority of 'A'ishah *Allah be pleased with her* that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'You will be assembled on the Day of Resurrection barefooted, naked, and uncircumcised.' ('Aisha) said, 'O Messenger of Allah, will the men and women look at one another?' He replied, 'O 'Aisha, the situation will be too hard for them to pay attention to that.'

The meaning of *khashya* in ‘...those who fear their Lord unseen...’ (*Fatir*: 18) is reverential fear accompanied with love, not antipathy. For example, you fear the aggression of a tyrant or an oppressor; you fear him reluctantly and with aversion. But your fear of Allah is a kind of fear emanating from awe and love. That is the reason why this fear is accompanied by hope and desire for His Mercy. You are travelling the journey of your life on two wings: fear of punishment and hope for mercy.

A human should not focus on the action in and of itself, but rather look at both the action and the receiver of that action. The action may be one and the same but has different receivers. For example, when the Quran was heard by a group of men⁽¹⁾ who were with Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Allah described their response in these words: ‘And among them, [O Muhammad], are those who listen to you, until when they depart from you, they say to those who were given knowledge, “What has he said just now?” Those are the ones of whom Allah has sealed over their hearts and who have followed their [own] desires.’ (*Muhammad*: 16)

But another person⁽²⁾ who heard the Quran reacted with a different response; he said: ‘By Allah, indeed it has sweetness and there is grace upon it. The highest part of it is fruitful and the lowest part of it is gushing forth with bounty. It is highest, nothing can be above it.

‘Umar’s heart softened and opened up to embrace Islam when he heard the Quran being recited. The Quran is one, but there is a difference between the one who hears it reluctantly and so shuts himself off from its guidance;

(1) *That is, the hypocrites. It was narrated by As-Suyuti in Asbab An-Nuzul (p.154) and Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir (vol. 4, p. 177).*

(2) The man in question was Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughirah. A group of the Quraysh had gathered with him to agree on what to say about the Quran. They wanted to settle on one opinion so that they would not voice different opinions regarding it in front of the people who would come to them during the *Hajj* season. One of them said: ‘Shall we say he is a soothsayer?’ Al-Walid said: ‘He is not a soothsayer. I have seen soothsayers. He does not have the tone or rhymed prose of a soothsayer.’ Another one of them said: ‘We will say he is a madman.’ Al-Walid said: ‘He is not a madman. We have seen madness and know what it is like - it does not throttle him, engage him, or whisper to him.’ Another one of them said: ‘So we will say he is a poet.’ Al-Walid said: ‘He is not a poet. We know poetry in all its forms; its meters [rajaz and hazaj], rhymes and rhythms, and it is not poetry.’ Then he said: ‘By Allah, the speech he says is very sweet; the first part is fruitful and the last part is abundant. [Narrated by Ibn Hisham in *As-Sirah An-Nabawiyah*, vol. 1. pp. 281-282]

and the one who hears it with a heedful heart open to receive the spiritual radiance and revelation contained in it.

Have you not seen that iron will respond to you if you strike it while it is hot? It becomes like dough in your hands. If you strike it while it is cold, it will not interact with you. Likewise, we say, as an example, that on a cold day you blow into your hands so that you can feel the warmth. You also blow into a cup of tea to cool it down. How can one action combine opposite purposes? We say that although the actor is one, the receiver of the action is different.

Likewise, Allah's Warning was the same to all, but it was received with humility and desire for guidance by one group of people, so they believed; and it was received with stubbornness and persistence in error by another group of people, so they benefited nothing from it and obtained no fruit at all.

Allah's saying: '...those who fear their Lord unseen...' (*Fatir*: 18) indicates that faith within the souls of these people has reached a perfect level at which the seen and the unseen are viewed as equal. This is exemplified by what 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* said: 'Even if the veil were lifted off from me, it would not increase my certainty.'

Also, when our Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked Abu Dhar *Allah be pleased with him* 'How are you this morning, O Abu Dhar?' He said: 'A true believer.' He said: 'Indeed, every truth has a reality, so what is the reality of your belief?' He replied: 'My soul has lost interest in this world so much that its gold and mud have become of the same value for me. And it is as if I can see the people of Paradise enjoying its bounties and the people of the Fire being punished.' The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him: 'You have known, so hold fast.'⁽¹⁾

Then the True Lord *the Exalted* mentions another attribute of those who respond to the warning of the Messenger of Allah *Glorified is He* and are benefited by it: '...and have established prayer...' (*Fatir*: 18). For they have a fear of Allah; a fear that makes them have the same level of faith whether they see

(1) Narrated by Al-Haythami in *Majma' Az-Zawa'id* (vol. 1, p. 57) and he attributed it to At-Tabarani in his book *Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir* based on the Hadith of Al-Harith ibn Malik Al-Ansari, and not Abu Dhar. Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalani attributed the Hadith to Ibn Mubarak in *Az-Zuhd*, in his book: *Al-Isaba Fi Tamyiz As-Sahaba* (Accuracy in Distinguishing the Companions)'

Allah or not. They also establish prayer. They perform it in the most perfect manner. Prayer (*Salat*), as we have mentioned, is the one act of worship that every accountable has no excuse for omitting. There may be certain circumstances that excuse you from obligatory charity (*zakat*) or from fasting (*sawm*) or from pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*) so that all that is left is the testimony that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Messenger of Allah. It is enough for you to say it, even if it is only for one time.

As for the prayer, it is the one act of worship that is practiced every day throughout the life of the Muslim because the prayer, in essence, is a constant devotion to Allah *the Exalted*. Your Lord is inviting you to meet Him five times each day and night. He is calling you so that the created comes before its Creator. What do you think of a made thing being shown to its maker five times in the day and night? Can any damage occur to it after this?

On the other hand, if you want to meet an important official in the life of this world, you have to go through barriers, gates, security guards, appointments and strict procedures. You do not have control over any of the elements of this meeting. Rather, the time, the topic, and even what you should say are set for you. You ask permission at the beginning of this meeting and you do not decide when to leave.

Your meeting with your Lord is totally different. You control all the elements of the meeting. You begin when you want to and you finish when you want to. You can talk privately to your Lord about whatever you desire. You let Him know your complaints. You present to Him your needs, and He hears and responds.

After the True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* mentions this ongoing worship, He confirms the following reality: ‘and whoever purifies himself only purifies himself for [the benefit of] his soul’ (*Fatir*: 18) which means that your worship is for your own good. Allah *the Most High* does not benefit in the least from it. He does not benefit by the obedience of those who obey Him, nor is He harmed by the disobedience of those who disobey Him.

He *Glorified is He* is absolutely Self-Sufficient and in no way dependent on or in need of any of His creatures. Our worshipping of Allah does not add a new attribute of perfection to His already Perfect Nature. Because with all the attributes of perfection eternally present in Him, He created us; and with all the attributes of perfection eternally present in Him, He commissioned us.

Therefore, the Qudsi Hadith says: 'O My slaves, were the first of you and the last of you, the human of you and the jinn of you, those of you who are present and those of you who are absent had the heart of the most pious person among you, this would not increase My Kingdom in anything. And were the first of you and the last of you, the human of you and the jinn of you, those of you who are present and those of you who are absent had the heart of the most wicked person among you, this would not decrease My Kingdom in anything. That is because I am the Magnanimous, the Glorious, and the All-Rich (the Independent). My Giving is speech and My Punishment is speech. My only Command for something if I want it to be is that I say 'Be' and it is.'⁽¹⁾

We are Allah's workmanship, and we have not seen a craftsman who demolishes or spoils his handiwork. Rather, he repairs and takes care of it. Therefore, if you are ever afflicted with ruin or suffering, know that in the end it is for you benefit.

'...And to Allah is the [final] destination' (*Fatir*: 18) means the final return of all and the final destination of all on the Day of Resurrection is to Allah so that He can arbitrate between adversaries, and everyone gets what they deserve. So whoever has escaped punishment in the life of this world, there is a final destination to which he must return.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ ﴿١٩﴾ وَلَا الظُّلُمَاتُ وَلَا النُّورُ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَلَا الظِّلُّ وَلَا الْحَرُورُ ﴿٢١﴾
وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَحْيَاءُ وَلَا الْأَمْوَاتُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُسْمِعُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَمَا أَنتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ مَّن فِي الْقُبُورِ ﴿٢٢﴾

The blind and the seeing are not alike [19] nor are darkness and light [20] Shade and heat are not alike [21] nor are the living and the dead. Allah makes anyone He wills hear [His message]: you cannot make those in their graves hear [22] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 19 - 22)

These are realities that the True Lord *the Exalted* has established; two mutually contradictory things are not equal. The blind person does not know the locations

(1) Narrated by At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (2495) on the authority of Abu Dhar Allah be pleased with him. He classed the Hadith as *hasan* (good authenticity). It was also narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (vol. 5, pp. 77, 154) and Ibn Majah in his *Sunnan* (4257).

of things while he is moving, but a seeing person can. The seeing person can watch the locations of things and avoid danger. As for the blind person, he must have a companion who volunteers, as a friend, to help him navigate his surroundings and make up by his healthy eyes for the absence of his sight. This is the reason why we say: 'If the blind person gives blindness its right, he begins to see. How? Because he is not too arrogant to seek help from someone who can see, and when he calls on someone to hold his hand, all eyes around him compete to help him. But if he is arrogant, he will trip and fall on his face very quickly.

Blindness and sight are sensations that clarify the abstract, for what is meant is that the ignorant and the knowledgeable are not equal. The movement of life is divided into a material movement that comes and goes, grows and declines etc., and a moral, immaterial movement, such as spiritualities and high moralities, which include faith, truthfulness, fidelity, justice and mercy, etc.

If it is the case that material, physical movement requires a sensory light to guide you so that you do not collide into something stronger than you, which could break you, or something weaker than you, in which case you would break it. The same applies to immaterial, spiritual movement. It also needs a moral light that guides your steps so that you do not go astray. This moral light is the law and way that Allah *Glorified is He* describes saying: 'Indeed, there has come to you from Allah a light and a plain Book (this Quran) wherewith Allah guides all those who seek His Good Pleasure to ways of peace, and He brings them out of darkness by His Will unto light and guides them to a Straight Way.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 15-16)

Just as the sun is the physical light, the Quran is the spiritual light; and, therefore, we say concerning Allah's saying: 'Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth...' (*an-Nur*: 35) that it means: He irradiates them with both kinds of light.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* has already mentioned to us the contrary nature of freshwater and saltwater. Regarding them, He says: 'and the two seas (kinds of water) are not alike, this fresh sweet, and pleasant to drink, and that salty and bitter...' (*Fatir*: 12). Yes, they are not equal; but rather, the relation between them is that of contrast, like the night and the day, not contradiction

like the blind and the seeing. The evidence is that Allah *the Most High* has combined them together in one statement: ‘...And from them both you eat fresh tender meat (fish), and derive the ornaments that you wear...’ (*Fatir*: 12). Contrasts are different, as each one of them has a task to perform; so they are mutually supportive and not mutually opposed.

After the True Lord *Glorified is He* states that the blind and the seeing are not equal, He says: ‘...nor are (alike) the darknesses and the light...’ (*Fatir*: 20) because light is the source of seeing, and even the one endowed with sight cannot see anything in darkness.

This is with respect to physical blindness and sight. As for values and morals, they have another standard. This is why Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* says: ‘...verily, it is not the eyes that grow blind, but it is the hearts which are in the breasts that grow blind.’ (*al-Hajj*: 46) So you can have a seeing person who is blind of insight. The one who is blind to morals is the one who is ignorant of the law that guides him to the sphere of the truth in all values. The seeing person is the one who knows these principles.

When you consider the style of these two glorious verses, you find in them the powerful features of the inimitability of Allah’s speech. The first is: ‘Not alike are the blind and the seeing...’ (*Fatir*: 19) where the conjunction *waw al-`atf* (and) connects the two nouns. As for the part saying: ‘...nor are (alike) the darknesses and the light...’ (*Fatir*: 20), the negative particle *la* (translated as nor) is used which emphasizes the lack of equality. The True Lord *Glorified is He* did not express it in the same way as the first, using *ma-yastawi* (not alike or equal). Why? Scholars opined that blindness and sight are two attributes that may both exist in one person. As someone may be blind today and see tomorrow or someone may be ignorant and then learn, or be a disbeliever and then believe. So the two attributes apply to him. Therefore, the meaning of the lack of equality is not emphasised. As for the darkness and light, they are opposites and mutually exclusive.

Likewise, we notice the precision of the Quranic diction; indeed because the Speaker is the True Lord Himself. He says: ‘...nor are (alike) the darknesses and the light...’ (*Fatir*: 20). The darkness here is stated in the plural (*zhulumat*), whereas light is in the singular because erroneous beliefs are manifold; some

worship the stars, some worship idols, some worship the angels etc. But the light is one, which is Allah's Law as revealed in His Book.

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to teach his Companions this lesson, so he drew before them a straight line, and around it several twisting lines, and then he read: 'And verily, this is my Straight Path, so follow it, and follow not (other) paths, for they will separate you away from His Path.' (*al-An'am*: 153)

Then He *the Exalted* says: '...nor are (alike) the shade and the sun's heat...' (*Fatir*: 21) and these two are also opposites and mutually exclusive. Likewise '...nor are (alike) the living and the dead...' (*Fatir*: 22). We notice here that the True Lord *Glorified is He* has again mentioned the negation of the verb '...nor are alike...' (*Fatir*: 22) to emphasize the lack of equality between the living and the dead

Likewise, Allah has mentioned the negative particle *la* (translated as nor) which indicates emphasis because 'the living' refers, in this context, to the true believers, who deserve eternal and everlasting life continuous with their transient worldly life. As for the dead, they are the disbelievers who have rejected Allah's way. We can also say that the living are those who have known that true life is to live according to their Lord's Way, and this will lead them to the true and everlasting life of which Allah *the Most High* says: 'The life of this world is merely an amusement and a diversion; the true life is in the Hereafter, if only they knew.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 64)

This is the life that is meant in Allah's saying: 'O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life.' (*al-Anfal*: 24) How can this be addressing them if they are actually alive? The meaning, therefore, is that they will be given true life that does not end in death, and without losing any of its gifts.

Also pertinent to this subject is Allah's saying: 'Is he who was dead and We gave him life and set for him a light (of Belief) whereby he can walk among people, like him who is in the darkness from which he can never come out?...' (*al-An'am*: 122)

One of the meanings that we can understand from the lack of parity between the living and the dead is that Allah has created the living being and

provided it with physical apparatuses, such as an intellect, nerves, muscles, ears, eyes etc. Each of these organs has significance and a function. It is the duty of the living being to use these blessings in a way that makes them a means for obtaining other blessings. A human must realize that he is on the journey of his life and he will most certainly die. But his Lord *Glorified is He* has obscured from him his appointed time of death and that amounts to disclosure in itself, so that it can remain as a reminder to him throughout his life and he can expect it at every moment. Your lifetime is being counted down, and the arrow of death has already been fired in your direction. How long you have to live depend on how long it takes to reach you.

After the True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* talks about the state of being accountable, He says that the one who is blind and ignorant of the principles of his religion is not like the one who sees and has knowledge of them, and the light of faith and guidance is not equal to the darkness of misguidance. He *the Most High* talks about the final outcome, He says: ‘...nor are alike the shade and the sun's heat...’ (*Fatir*: 21). This shade is an allusion to the bliss of the Paradise. In another place in the Quran, He says: ‘...We (Allah) shall admit them to shades wide and ever deepening (Paradise).’ (*an-Nisa*’: 57) The word *al-harur* (translated as the intense heat of the sun) is an allusion to torture in Hell and the severity of its heat.

Then Allah *the Exalted* says to His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in consolation: ‘...verily, Allah makes whom He will hear, but you cannot make hear those who are in graves.’ (*Fatir*: 22) The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* confronted disbelief and ignorance from his people, and his call was to bring them out of blindness and ignorance to that which would enlighten their understandings, and take them out of the darkness of misguidance into the light of faith.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was very keen for his people to be guided, so much so that he almost destroyed himself in the course of calling them. Therefore, His Lord addressed him, saying: ‘Then perhaps you would kill yourself through grief over them, [O Muhammad], if they do not believe in this message, [and] out of sorrow.’ (*al-Kahf*: 6)

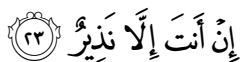
Likewise here, Allah addresses him, saying: ‘...verily, Allah makes whom He will hear...’ (*Fatir*: 22), That is, attentive hearing of guidance and acceptance of it; otherwise, they all hear. There is receptive and unreceptive hearing of Allah’s Word. There are those who respond, believe, and are affected by Allah’s Speech; and there are also those who hear and then reject and turn away from what they have heard. This is the reason why Allah says about them: ‘Had Allah known of any good in them, He would indeed have made them listen, and even if He had made them listen, they would but have turned away, averse (to the truth).’ (*al-Anfal*: 23)

Therefore, O Muhammad, you have done what you have been commanded to do regarding them, and you have called them to guidance. You have given them gentle guidance, and also straightforward admonition, full of warning and threatening: ‘...but you cannot make hear those who are in graves’ (*Fatir*: 22) because they refused to listen, Allah has likened them to the dead. Such being the case, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did, indeed, address the dead disbelievers at the well of Badr (where their corpses were thrown). He stood at it and called them by their names: ‘O ‘Utbah bin Rabi’a! O Shaybah ibn Rabi’a! O Abu Jahl! Have you found what your Lord has promised you to be true? Indeed, we have found what our Lord has promised us to be true.’

When ‘Umar Allah *be pleased with him* heard this, he said: ‘Are you talking to people who have rotted?’ He *peace and blessings be upon him* replied: ‘By Allah, you do not hear what I am saying better than they, but they cannot reply.’⁽¹⁾ The meaning is that you cannot make them hear in a way that makes them accept guidance, just as you cannot make those in the graves hear because the time for hearing and accepting guidance ends with death.

But if Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not able to make those in the graves hear what, then, was his mission? Allah *the Exalted* afterwards says:

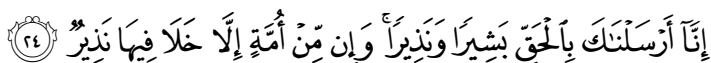
(1) Narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* (2874) from the Hadith of Anas ibn Malik Allah *be pleased with him*. According to this Hadith, ‘Umar Allah *be pleased with him* said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, how can they hear and respond to you when they are rotting corpses?’ He *peace and blessings be upon him* said: ‘By the One in Whose Hand is my soul, you do not hear what I say any better than they do, but they cannot reply.’ He then commanded that they be dragged away and thrown into the well of Badr.



**You are only here to warn them [23]
(The Quran, *Fatir*: 23)**

The meaning here is: You are no more than a warner; that is, you warn people against sin and subsequent punishment. As if Allah *the Exalted* wanted to make things easy for His Messenger so He specified to him his only mission. It was not for him to go beyond it and bring hardship upon himself to the extent of almost destroying himself. If Allah wanted all mankind to be believers, they would have come obediently and submissively, like all other creatures. ‘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 heaven a sign for which their necks would remain humbled.’ (*ash-Shu'ara*: 3-4)

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



**We have sent you with the Truth as a bearer of
good news and warning – every community has
been sent a warner [24] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 24)**

The truth is that which is firmly established and does not change. Allah *Glorified is He* gives us a perceptible example to clarify the difference between truth and falsehood, saying: ‘He sends water from the sky that fills riverbed to overflowing, each according to its measure. The stream carries on its surface a growing layer of froth, like the froth that appears when people melt metals in the fire to make ornaments and tools: in this way Allah illustrates truth and falsehood—the froth disappears, but what is of benefit to mankind remains in the earth—this is how Allah makes illustrations.’ (*ar-Ra'd*: 17)

We have already explained the relationship between truth and falsehood in a way that is relevant to our time, and we said: Right is right. Even if falsehood takes on the appearance of truth for some time, it is like froth that is quickly blown away by the wind to reveal the truth underneath and the obvious reality.

Allah’s saying to His Prophet: ‘Indeed, We have sent you with the truth...’ (*Fatir*: 24) is an indication that he is the Last of all the Messengers and

Prophets after whom there will be no prophet. No part of the guidance he brought will be changed. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has come with the firmly established, unalterable truth. No one can come and amend anything after him. The bane of humanity now is that they rule their era and the developing circumstances of reign and authority based on infringements against Islamic law. So when we come across a law infringing on the principles of Islam, we hear them say that it is an inevitable evolution. These people are the advocates of modernizing the religion, meaning the subjugation of the religion to suit the age.

This means that the changing times are the legislator, when in fact it should be the age that receives the legislation of the heavens, and the progress of the age should be based on its light and guidance. Certainly, progress that is based on the guidance of the heavens is the superior progress, being provided by the Lord *the Most High* Who truly knows what, is good for you, and He will never be corrected. As for what a man, like you, legislates for you, even when he views it as good for you, it is good as far as his own point of view is concerned and according to the limit of his knowledge. So it will inevitably be deficient and lacking. There will always be someone who will come along afterwards to abrogate it and correct it.

This is why we have seen how even non-Muslims find it necessary, due to issues in their own lives, to seek recourse in adopting Islamic solutions in order to overcome their problems. Of course, they do not adopt the Islamic rulings because they love them. They only do so because they cannot find a solution elsewhere. One of these issues is that of divorce, which they often surround it with doubts and use it to criticize Islam. In Italy now they are establishing divorce, not because Islam legislated it, but because their problems cannot be solved without it.

This issue clarifies for us the meaning of Allah's saying: 'It is He Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth to make it prevail over all religions – however hateful this may be to those who ascribe partners to Allah.' (*at-Tawba*: 33)

We were asked during some of our travels about how the Quran says: '...to make it prevail over all religions – however hateful this may be to those who ascribe partners to Allah...' (*at-Tawba*: 33) and in another verse: '...but

Allah will perfect His Light – however hateful this may be to the disbelievers’ (*as-Saff*: 8), so how is Allah’s Light spread in all its fullness while there are many other religions besides Islam, and they still exist, and most of them have greater numbers of followers than Islam and are more powerful? These people have understood ‘...but Allah will perfect His Light...’ (*as-Saff*: 8) to mean that all people will become Muslims. But if that was the case, then Allah *the Exalted* would not have said: ‘...however hateful this may be to the disbelievers’ (*as-Saff*: 8) and ‘...however hateful this may be to those who ascribe partners to Allah’ (*as-Saff*: 9) accordingly, the True Lord *the Most High* is affirming the presence of *Shirk* (associating others with Allah in His Divinity or worship) and disbelief alongside Islam. The intended meaning is that Allah will spread His Light in all its fullness, despite people’s disbelief and *Shirk* throughout history, yet still no people will ever be able to put out this light. It will remain, and it will triumph and prevail over their laws such that they will not find solutions to their issues except in this light (religion).

Allah says: ‘...as a bearer of good tidings and a warner...’ (*Fatir*: 24). A bearer of good tidings (*bashir*) is the person who gives good news of good things before they take place. A warner (*nadhir*) warns against evil before it takes place. ‘...And there was no nation but that there had passed within it a warner.’ (*Fatir*: 24) Again we have the meaning of negation and exception, as in ‘You are only a warner’ (*Fatir*: 23). The meaning is that there was never a community that has not had a warner who came to it and passed away.

A community (*ummah*; literally a nation) is a group of people united by a common land, customs, or creed. One of the meanings of the word (*ummah*) is also found in Allah’s saying: ‘Verily, Ibrahim (Abraham) was an *Ummah* (a leader having all the good righteous qualities) (*an-Nahl*: 120) meaning although Prophet Ibrahim *peace be upon him* was but one individual, yet he was described as a ‘nation’ by uniting in his person all virtues and attributes of goodness such that if all the good qualities of one community were gathered together, you would find them all in Prophet Ibrahim *peace be upon him*.

Since all the previous communities had a warner sent to them, Messenger Muhammad *peace be upon him* is the last warner. Why? Because the situation of the world in the past was that people were dispersed and cut off from one

another due to the difficulties of communication. Communities lived in isolation and there was no contact between them. So every environment had its own frailties, shortcomings and traditions, and then a messenger would come to treat the maladies of his people only. Our master Nuh (Noah *peace be upon him*) came to guide a people who were worshipping a number of idols: *Wudd*, *Suwa`*, *Yaghuth*, *Ya`uq* and *Nasr*. Prophet Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* came to treat the social ill of homosexuality among his people, and so forth.

As for our master Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he came at a time in which people from all over the world were coming into contact with one another, civilizations and societies were crossing paths, and thus a flaw in one community would become a flaw in all other communities. This intermingling has increased to such an extent that today we can see and hear what is happening in the far corners of the earth in a second. We can learn about the weaknesses and deficiencies of other people; as though they are the same as those in our own country. Therefore, all maladies and defects have converged into common problems, and the entire world has become one global environment (with global solutions). This is why the message of Islam is a global message, and our master Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is sent to all of mankind.

Then the True Lord *the Exalted* says:

وَلَا يَكْذِبُونَكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ جَاءَتْهُمْ
رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ

**If they call you a liar, their predecessors did the same:
messengers came to them with clear signs, scriptures, and
enlightening revelation [25] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 25)**

Here the meaning is: O Muhammad, take an example for yourself from your brothers, the previous messengers. They were all denied and rejected. This has been a habitual attitude. You, O Muhammad, are not a new kind of messenger. Earlier, we have explained that Allah *Glorified is He* does not send a messenger unless corruption is widespread and the treatment for it is lacking. The people there are no longer the souls who are self-reproaching (*al-nafs al-lawwama*), which holds one back from disobedience and sin. And the society is no longer

a place that enjoins the right and forbids the wrong. This means that there is nothing restraining the individual or the society from evil; both are not immune. The society itself has turned corrupt in total, and its people have agreed upon error and misguidance. At this point the heavens must intervene with a new messenger who comes with a miraculous supporting sign that is appropriate to the age he is living in.

Allah says: 'And if they belie you, those before them also belied...' (*Fatir*: 25). A messenger only comes to confront corruption in a society, and it is natural that he will face people who are astray, or are transgressors, or tyrants and oppressors who benefit from this corruption. If they deny him, then Allah explains this fact saying: 'And thus We have placed within every city the greatest of its criminals to conspire therein...' (*al-An'am*: 123).

The word *bayyinat* (clear incontestable signs) in Allah's saying: '...their Messengers came to them with clear signs...' (*Fatir*: 25) signifies obvious concrete proofs that attest to the veracity of the speaker and his mission of conveying his Lord's Message to mankind. This constitutes *mu'jizah* (a miracle or extraordinary occurrence). A messenger comes with a miracle so that it can be evidence of the veracity of his mission as a prophet and messenger of Allah. Miracles are not the objective of the message. The objective of the message is only to convey the divine laws and doctrine.

The meaning of: '...and with the Scriptures (*the Zubur*, pl. of *Zabur*)...' (*Fatir*: 25) is the heavenly books that have been sent down, such as the *Suhuf* (Scrolls) of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* the Torah of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* the Injil (Gospel) of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. However, the heavenly books specified here in this verse are the *Zabur* (the Psalms) and the Quran '...the Scriptures (*the Zubur*), and the book giving light (*the Quran*)...' because the *Zabur*, which was the Book revealed to Prophet Dawud *peace be upon him* was distinguished by the fact that it was inscribed in clear prominent letters. This is why it was firmly established; it was not written in ink, which would have allowed it to be erased, for example. It resembles the engraving of stones, and it is what they call (*al-awima*).⁽¹⁾

(1) *Az-Zabidi* said in *Al-Basa'ir*: 'The book of Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* was called *Zabur* because it descended from the heavens in a written form. It was also said that it =

The light-giving Book is the Noble Quran because it provides the moral light that illuminates for humanity the path of life and directs and guides their movement. If the sun is the physical light that guides your physical movement, the Quran is the spiritual light that guides whoever believes in it.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ ﴿٢٦﴾

**And afterwards I seized the disbelievers – how terrible
My punishment was! [26] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 26)**

This is Allah's constant Way of dealing with the messengers; that He punishes those who disbelieve in them and oppose them. Have you ever seen a prophet that Allah surrendered or allowed to be defeated in the face of his own people who were opposing him? Allah has promised His messengers victory and support, as He *Glorified is He* has said: 'Verily, We (Allah) will indeed make victorious Our Messengers and those who believe in this world's life...' (*Ghafir*: 51).

Allah *the Most High* also says: 'and that Our hosts, they verily would be the victors' (*as-Saffat*: 173). For this reason, if you see a soldier of Allah being defeated in some areas and not being victorious, know that one of the requirements of being a soldier is missing. The first requirement of being Allah's soldier is obedience. If a soldier disobeys Allah's Commands, he must be defeated. This is why we say the Muslims were victorious at the Battle of Badr even though they were a small group: '...How often a small group overcame a mighty host by Allah's Leave' (*al-Baqara*: 249).

Less than a year after Badr the battle of Uhud took place, and while it is true that the Muslims were not defeated, they were not victorious either. This is because they lost control of the battle when the archers went against the command of Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* by abandoning their positions and descending in order to gather the spoils. Allah wanted to discipline His sincere servants so it was necessary to give them this severe shock, and thus they saw the result of their disobedience.

= was the name of a book that was confined to rational wisdom and contained no legal rulings. It can be called a (*kitab*; book) when it contains rulings.' See the book of *Taj Al-'Arus* by Az-Zabidi, under the root (*za-ba-ra*).

This is why we say that Islam was victorious at Uhud, even though the Muslims were not victorious because if they had been victorious in spite of disobeying Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* afterwards the Muslims would have slighted the importance of the Messenger of Allah's Commands. They would have said: 'We disobeyed his commands, but we were victorious at Uhud.' There is no doubt that this unsettled result was to let the Muslims know the importance of obeying the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and taking him as an example.

Likewise, in the Battle of Hunayn, Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* saw the great number of Muslims and said: 'We will not be defeated today for lack of numbers,' and they were ten thousand fighters. Allah wanted to shatter this arrogant illusion of the Muslims, and thus the disbelievers had the upper hand from the beginning of the battle until the Muslims were surrounded. But Allah's Mercy did not forsake them and once again encompassed them, as if He only wanted to correct this mistake on their part and did not want them to be struck with defeat.

When we reflect on the meaning of 'Then I seized the ones who disbelieved...' (*Fatir*: 26), we find that the verb *akhadh* (seize or take) indicates the strength behind taking and pulling by force which grips the entire entity that is being seized or taken. When talking about human beings, the phrase 'he took so and so' means 'he drove him' or 'he dragged him,' for example, by his clothes, and kept him in his grip. But if you say, 'Allah seized him,' then learn that Allah's seizing of wrongdoers is severe; He is Almighty, All-Capable. Therefore, Allah says next: '...and how [terrible] was My Reproach (*nakir*)!' (*Fatir*: 26) that is to say: My Reproach and rejection of what they have done. The word (*nakir*) expresses something that evokes your condemnation and anger.

So what do you think about a people whose ways have been condemned by Allah and He becomes angry with them? He will most certainly seize them in a way that satisfies His devoted servants and those who believe in Him.

Allah's saying: '...and how [terrible] was My Reproach' (*Fatir*: 26) means: 'Tell me, O Muhammad, have I punished them with what they deserve'. This meaning is also clear in His saying: 'Indeed, those who committed crimes used to laugh at those who believed. And when they passed by them, they would exchange derisive glances. And when they returned to their people,

they would return jesting. And when they saw them, they would say, “Indeed, those are truly lost.” But they had not been sent as guardians over them. So today those who believed are laughing at the disbelievers, on adorned couches, observing. Have the disbelievers [not] been repaid [this Day] for what they used to do?’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29-36)

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ ثَمَرَاتٍ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهَا
وَمِنَ الْجِبَالِ جُدَدٌ بَيَضٌ وَحُمْرٌ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهَا وَغَرَابِيبُ سُودٌ ﴿٢٧﴾

Have you [Prophet] not considered how Allah sends water down from the sky and that We produce with it fruits of varied colours; that there are in the mountains layers of white and red of various hues, and jet black [27]
(The Quran, *Fatir*: 27)

We notice that the True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* is reminding us of some of His Blessings upon us, and he then He states some of the requirements. This is how He puts your heart at ease with beneficence towards you so that you respond to His requirements. The True Lord *the Exalted* is reminding His servants through this cosmic sign; the sign of water being sent down from the sky, after He has made it clear to His Prophet that He will severely seize the disbelievers. It is as if Allah *the Exalted* is saying to His Messenger: Put aside the issue of these disbelievers, as I am able to punish them. Instead, reflect on this cosmic sign: ‘Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky...’ (*Fatir*: 27).

His saying: ‘Do you not see that Allah...’ (*Fatir*: 27) means have you not watched or witnessed because everyone can see the water descending from above and the sky is everything that is above you, sheltering you. ‘Have you not seen how your Lord...’ (*al-Fil*: 1) means: Have you not known? This was regarding the issues that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not witness, as in Allah’s saying: ‘Have you (O Muhammad) not seen how your Lord dealt with the Owners of the Elephant?’ (*al-Fil*: 1)

It is known that our master Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not see the Event of the Elephant, but his Lord addressed him with ‘Have

you not seen how your Lord...’ (*al-Fil*: 1) to indicate that whatever Allah informs him of is more reliable and truthful than that which is witnessed by the eye.

Water being sent down from the sky means coming from its direction; otherwise the sky is something else because rain only comes down from the clouds that are close to the earth. We say: The issue of water being sent down from the direction of the sky appears to be a natural matter, as water vapour collects itself in the sky in the form of clouds that are saturated with water. The water has a weight which causes it to descend due to the gravitational pull of the earth. This is why Allah *the Exalted* mentions the descent of rain and immediately after the bringing forth of vegetation ‘...and We produce thereby fruits of varying colours...’ (*Fatir*: 27). But if you said that the descent of rain from the sky is a natural phenomenon, there could be doubt that it is an act of nature; if so, is the bringing of the earth back to life and the bringing forth of plants that have different fruits and colours also an act of nature?

The phrase ‘...sends down...’ (*Fatir*: 27) indicate the highness of what is being sent down and the lowness of where it is going; even if the opposite is the ‘sending down’ process is from a lower place to a higher place, as in Allah’s saying: ‘...And We sent down iron, wherein is mighty power (in matters of war) and benefits for the people...’ (*al-Hadid*: 25). Iron is actually extracted from the depths of the earth, but Allah has called it ‘sending down’ (*inzal*) because what is intended is the bringing forth of something from on high to that which is below regardless of whether the direction is from above or below.

We witness the process of water being sent down from the sky, but we do not witness the evaporation process that takes place on the surface of the water on earth. It then ascends to the stratus of the upper atmosphere where clouds are formed by way of condensation. Mankind knew nothing about these processes before the advancement of science, but we learned about the process of water filtration.

As for the process of bringing forth plants and fruits that have different colours, this is something that is clear and witnessed in gardens and fields. We all see the amazing and wonderful colours and different shapes that are limitless in number and variety because the colours of the spectrum, if they

are the original colours, can produce an unlimited number of colours. If you take the colour black, for example, and add to it a drop of brown, for example, you will have another colour. If you add two drops, you will have a third colour; this is how colours are unlimited. We can see this now in the manufacturing of fabrics. Their colours have become so numerous, with endless shades and patterns. Therefore, we say that colours are limitless entities.

It is for you to reflect upon the intersecting of colours and their harmony in a flower or rose in a garden, and you will see in their colours a dazzling wonder. The seed is one and the same, the earth is one and the same, the water is one and the same, but from all of this there emerge these splendid shapes and harmonious colours. This is because a phenomenon bears the fingerings of the one who authored it. If the author is of limited power, the traces of his power are also limited. And if the Author possesses unlimited power, the traces of His Power are also unlimited. The True Lord possesses Absolute and Infinite Power, and so are His Traces and Fingerprints in creation.

You will notice in the context of this glorious verse that when the True Lord *the Exalted* speaks about sending down rain from the sky, He says: ‘...[He] sends down rain from the sky...’ (*Fatir*: 27) using the third person pronoun. But when He talks about the bringing forth of fruits, He says: ‘...We produce thereby fruits of varying colours...’ (*Fatir*: 27). So, He shifts to the first person plural pronoun Arabic word *nahnu* (Royal, used by Allah in the Quran to indicate majesty and power) to indicate grandeur and majesty. Why? Because sending down water from the sky is not the objective in and of itself; it is not what is important. Evidence for this is that rain may descend on marshland areas where it is of no benefit. As for the process of bringing forth fruits, this is the important process for which Allah sends down rain. This is the reason why He mentions it using the first person plural pronoun – royal ‘We’ – that emphasizes majesty and sublimity because the True Lord wants to exalt Himself in reference to this act, as in His saying: ‘We have sent down the Quran Ourselves, and We ourselves will guard it.’ (*al-Hijr*: 9)

We know from convention that events differ if the producer is different. If the event is brought about by a single individual, it will be according to the ability of this single individual. If a group of people support one another, it

will be according to the level of this mutual support. Thus, when we hear a king or ruler issuing laws that govern people, he says, 'We the President of the Republic' or 'We the King of Egypt' or 'We the Sultan of such and such...' because issuing laws is not an individual matter that is established by the ruler or king alone, and it is not pronounced in his name. His subjects participate with him in this, and it is pronounced in the name of all of them.

Therefore, we find the True Lord *Glorified is He* using the first person plural pronoun when talking to us about one of His Actions. But when He talks about His Essence, He uses the singular pronoun, such as: 'Verily, I – I alone – am God; there is no god save Me. Hence, worship Me alone, and be constant in prayer, so as to remember Me!' (*Ta Ha*: 14)

The sending down of rain is a process that has one form, but bringing forth of vegetation encompasses wide varieties of forms. The water that is sent down from the sky is one and the same, yet the effects of the water are numerous. This fruit is yellow, this is white, this is red etc. Therefore, this process of bringing forth deserves an appropriate exaltation.

However, is the bringing forth of fruits happens directly or involves first the bringing forth of the plants that bear the fruit? The answer is that there is first the bringing forth of the plants that bear fruit. The True Lord *the Exalted* defines for us a thing in terms of its ultimate purpose, which is the fruit. This fruit comes in different colours despite having one environment and being irrigated by the same water. When you reflect on the various colours of fruits, you see in them Allah's Absolute Creative Power. These colours are not just for the sake of outward appearance and ornamentation, but rather, there is wisdom that the Creator *Glorified is He* intended for them. One of them is that these colours attract fertilizing insects.

If you contemplate these colours, you will find that they are varied even within one colour. Have you not noticed that the white of snow is not like the white of clothes, or the white of lime? This is why people describe colours by saying 'bright white,' 'brilliant yellow,' 'blood-red,' and 'dark green.'

After talking to us about one of His signs in plants, the True Lord *the Exalted* talks to us about inanimate bodies: '...And in the mountains, are tracts, white

and red of varying shades and [some] raven-black.’ (*Fatir*: 27) In inanimate bodies we can also see colours; for example, when we split rock formations to extract what is in the earth. You can see granite, marble, and carnelian in different colours as well.

The word ‘...tracts...’ (*Fatir*: 27) is the plural of *juda* (narrow tract or streak), and it is a dividing line between two things. You must have seen a striped wild donkey and the extent to which these streaks are symmetrical. You can also see an example of this in the strata of mountains as they have different shades of red and white.

The meaning of ‘...raven-black...’ (*Fatir*: 27) is extremely black. The word *gharbib* (raven-black) is used to describe very dark black colour and is ascribed to the raven due to its intense blackness.

After the True Lord *Glorified is He* reminds us of the categories of plants and inanimate objects, He reminds us that these differences are also found in mankind and animals, and these present the categories of existence. He *the Most High* says:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ وَالْدَّوَابِّ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَنُهُ، كَذَلِكَ إِنَّمَا
يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ

**That there are various colours among human beings,
wild animals, and livestock too? It is those of His
servants who have knowledge who stand in true awe
of Allah. Allah is almighty, most forgiving [28]
(The Quran, *Fatir*: 28)**

Therefore, difference is found in all categories because the creation is based on Allah’s Absolute Power. All humans, despite their multiplicity, are different. This wondrous marvel indicates Allah’s Absolute Power. Creation is not based on one mould from which copies are made. When you look at a man you might say that he resembles so and so, but at a closer look, you are bound to notice some differences. Thus we can see that Allah’s Absolute Power necessitates that there be variation in all the categories of existence: inanimate objects, plants, animals, and humans.

The meaning of *dawab* (moving living creatures) is every creature that moves on the earth aside from mankind and cattle which includes cows, sheep, camels, and goats.

Allah says: ‘...It is those of His servants who have knowledge who stand in true awe of Allah...’ (*Fatir*: 28). Awe (*khashya*) is fear that is combined with hope. It is one of the actions of the hearts within the souls of those who possess true knowledge of Allah. You may fear your enemy, for example, but you have no hope in him. Allah is the only One Who, when you fear Him, you also hope in Him, while feeling love for Him. For this reason, they said: There is no refuge from Allah except in Him.

Knowledge can refer to Islamic legal knowledge, which is the knowledge of Islamic rulings: the permissible, the impermissible, the obligatory, the supererogatory, the recommended etc. Or else it can refer to cosmic knowledge. This verse is stated within the context of discussing signs in the cosmos, and nothing regarding legal rulings is mentioned prior to it. We therefore say that what is meant by ‘*ulama*’ (scholars or knowledgeable people) here is cosmic and natural phenomena researchers and scientists. It is apt that these people, more than anyone else, should fear Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* because they are most aware of the signs in nature, as found in inanimate objects, plants, animals, and humans. Of all people, they are the most capable of discovering the secrets that Allah has embedded in these signs of creation.

The cosmic phenomena of the universe are evidence of the One Who necessarily exists. It is the beginning of finding the Creator *the Most High* and believing in Him. For this reason, we find in the Quran numerous verses such as the following: ‘And of His Signs is your sleep by night and day and your seeking of His Bounty. Indeed in that are signs for a people who listen.’ (*ar-Rum*: 23)

If knowledge is decisive and evidence-based with respect to the field of Islamic legal knowledge, which the True Lord *the Exalted* has sent down to us in the form of the Islamic law and defined for us its limits, without us having in say in it because Allah has perfected it and protected it against distortion. This is because people’s likes and dislikes differ, and the True Lord points this out when He says: ‘But if the Truth had followed their inclinations, the heavens and the earth and whoever is in them would have been ruined...’

(*al-Mu'minun*: 71). As for knowledge of the cosmos, the Creator *the Exalted* has left it open to the intellects to research into it, derive conclusions, and compete excel in it. Some countries even steal such knowledge from one another.

The bane of the modern age is that the scholars of Islamic law poke their noses into natural phenomena, or the scholars of natural phenomena poke their noses into legal rulings. We have already witnessed an example of this. When some scientists said that the earth was round and that it revolved around the sun, some Islamic legal scholars rushed to accuse them of disbelief. This is a serious error. They should have considered the rule that the True Lord *the Exalted* has set down to protect against professing views according to personal opinions and whims because the shape of the earth and its movement is a cosmic matter that has nothing to do with the permissible and the impermissible.

In this regard, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Ask those who have knowledge if you do not know.' (*an-Nahl*: 43) The people of knowledge in the sciences of Islamic law and jurisprudence are different from the people of knowledge in the natural sciences. They must both respect the specialist knowledge that each of them has in their respective fields. The scholars of the Islamic law must not forget that it is the scholars of natural science who are uncovering for us Allah's secrets in creation, They are the ones who engender in our hearts the certainty in the proofs for belief in the One Who necessarily exists, the One from Whom the rulings of the permissible and the impermissible are issued.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* created the universe in a pristine state. If you were to enter an untouched wilderness – that no one had yet entered and it was still as it was when Allah created it – you would not find any filthiness or unpleasant smells and there would be no litter or broken twigs and so forth. You would see it in perfect tidiness, order, and harmony. Any residues from it would be food for other animals, so it is self-cleaning.

I remember that we saw in the valley of Fatimah in Saudi Arabia a spring of water irrigating the valley around it, and in one of the little streams we saw some small fish, all of the same size like tiny ears of corn. So I asked the owner of the garden: 'Does this fish grow?' He said: 'No. It stays like this, and it only comes after we have thrown some leftover food in the water. It appears to feed

on it and then vanishes.' It is as if it has the specific task of cleaning the water. When we went back to Egypt, we found the same fish at the Marine Life Museum performing the same task: cleaning the fish tanks of waste.

That is why we say that there is no corruption in nature until man interferes, based on the evidence that created things untouched by man continue to follow a strict and controlled system that has no imbalance. For this reason, when you see a food crisis, know that it is the result of human error, or the result of negligence in extracting the earth's resources.

Therefore, the scholars of law must not involve themselves in natural sciences, and the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us this when he forbade them from pollinating the date palm, and the date palm did not bear fruit. When the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* saw this, he took it upon himself and said: 'You know best about the affairs of your world.'⁽¹⁾ This means that the issues of natural science as well as laboratory and empirical issues are matters in which legal rulings have no say, but the bane of scholars today is that they do not stick to what they specialise in.

That is why Allah specifically means the scholars of the natural sciences here because they are the ones who are most capable of closely examining Allah's secrets. The True Lord *Glorified is He* has made His universe replete with secrets that suit the development of the age and the passing of time. The secrets that man knew in the Stone Age, for example, are not the ones that are known in the modern age. Allah's wisdom wanted to set a date for each of His secrets to manifest itself such that the secrets would not be manifested all at one time and leave man facing the rest of time without anything new.

When you reflect on this matter, you find that the True Lord *Glorified is He* has made the essentials of man's life manifest, and He then left the self-evident matters that people know for them to make progress in them. Man, for example, makes use intuitively of the fact that water flows downwards, and this intuition

(1) Narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* (2363) from the Hadith of Anas ibn-Malik Allah be pleased with him that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* passed by a people who were pollinating and said: 'If you did not do this, it would flourish.' He said the result was *shisa* (bad dates) and he passed by them and asked, 'What happened to your date palm?' They said: 'You said such and such.' He said: 'You know best the about the affairs of your world.'

developed such that man began to receive water in his house via taps, after he had been transferring water from wells and rivers, undergoing difficulty in the process. However, when he puts his intellect to use, regarding the self-evident truths of the universe, he advances and reaps the rewards of this advancement. That is why we find that the most difficult scientific and electronic theories are taken, in the beginning, from self-evident truths. We say in the science of engineering that you prove the veracity of the one-hundredth theorems by using the ninety-ninth theorem, and so on until you reach the first theorem. It is based on the self-evident truths of the universe over which there is no difference of opinion.

That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* is always calling us to think, reflect, and ponder, etc. What human beings have achieved today of appliances and modern equipment, such as the washing machine, the refrigerator, the television and so forth, are nothing other than the results of thinking, which promoted self-evident truths until they arrived at where they are now. Whoever wants to stop and think about this advancement will see Allah's Power in the continuing growth of industries and their development from decade to decade, so let one go to Detroit and see Henry Ford's exhibition which shows the development of industry from the sewing needle to the rocket.

The universe therefore contains secrets that are discovered by man, and every secret has a date on which it will appear, either by way of man's research or even by chance. It is from Allah's Grace that atheists, when they discover some of the secrets of the universe, say, 'We discovered', and none of them say 'We invented'. It is as if Allah *the Exalted* turned them away and diverted them from using the word 'invent' and distorted their tongues so that they would not have audacity before Allah. Gravity, for example, has existed since the creation of the heavens and the earth and the role of man is that he discovered this secret. That is why we say to the one who says, 'I invented': 'This is a lie. What is correct is to say that you discovered'.

In His saying: '...verily Allah is Almighty, Much-Forgiving' (*Fatir*: 28), 'Almighty' means that He is not overcome, and He is Much-Forgiving towards you if you avoid neglect and deficiency whilst extracting Allah's secrets in the universe. He will forgive you if you make a mistake in one of your experiments, as someone will come afterwards and correct it.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ
سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً يَرْجُونَ تِجَارَةً لَّن تَبُورَ ﴿٢٩﴾ لِيُؤْفِقَهُمْ أَجُورَهُمْ
وَيَزِيدَهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ ﴿٣٠﴾

Those who recite Allah's scripture, keep up the prayer, give secretly and openly from what We have provided for them, may hope for a trade that will never decline [29] He will repay them in full, and give them extra from His bounty. He is most forgiving, most appreciative [30] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 29 - 30)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions the natural sciences, and that it is a means of acquiring awe of Allah and knowing His secrets in the universe, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to divert our attention and warn us: You who are being tried with the natural sciences! It is making you forget your duty to take from Allah what will please you. Allah *Glorified is He* then talks about the way: '[It is] they who [truly] follow Allah's revelation...' (*Fatir*: 29), and this is referring to legal knowledge and the reminder that protects people from their contradicting likes and dislikes.

The meaning of '[truly] follow Allah's revelation' (*Fatir*: 29) is that they articulate it with their tongues and they follow it with their hearts; 'and are constant in prayer' (*Fatir*: 29) which means worship that involves all the limbs, and 'and spend on others, secretly and openly, out of what We provide for them as sustenance...' (*Fatir*: 29) means spending on others and especially financially as this is an evidence of the generosity of the soul in what it gives out, and its love for spending and giving secretly and openly. By spending on others, the soul is perfecting the attributes of goodness, and the actions of the heart and the actions of the limbs are coming together to obey Allah.

His saying: 'out of what We provide for them as sustenance' (*Fatir*: 29) means that spending on others is not from your private wealth, but rather, it is from Allah Who has provided you, and made you appoint someone else over it. Your expenditure is nothing but a means and the means in existence are veiled by the Hand of Allah in giving.

Those who spend on others from what Allah has provided them, secretly and openly ‘...it is they who may look forward to a bargain that can never fail.’ (*Fatir*: 29) Spending on others for Allah’s sake is commerce with Allah ‘...that can never fail.’ (*Fatir*: 29) That is, it will never result in loss, but it is only gain. You, when you spend on the needy and when you feed the hungry, you are only endearing Allah to His creation. Have you seen that if one of the kings in the like of this world has slaves, is he not responsible for feeding them and satisfying their needs? This is from the characteristics of greatness in him. Likewise, the True Lord *Glorified is He* is the Creator of these poor people, and He is the One Who summoned them to exist, and Allah *Glorified is He* is responsible for providing for them.

Therefore, when you feed them you are carrying out Allah’s duty, and you are endearing Allah’s creation to Allah. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* causes a created being to have affection for another created being, it is as if He is saying, ‘My slave was assisting Me with regards to My creation’ because Allah *the Exalted* summoned the creation to exist, and He took it upon Himself to make them free of want. When a wealthy servant of His assists a poor person, it is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying: ‘My servant was helping his brother out of his own capacity, so I must help him out of My capacity’, and the servant will never be more generous than his Creator. How can the servant show compassion when he has not created anything, and he has not summoned anyone to exist, and the Creator *Glorified is He* does not show compassion?

If you ask, ‘Since the True Lord has summoned the creation to existence, then why does He not guarantee for them a noble life in which they will not need compassion from someone else’? We say: ‘The True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to distribute the seeds of love and mutual compassion amongst His creation. He wanted a Muslim community based on love, co-operation, and solidarity. Then Allah *Glorified is He* promised the generous and giving that He would deal with them according to His Generosity and Giving’.

This is the trade which will never fail with Allah. Failure is ruin, i.e. corruption, and it can afflict trade in one of two ways; either corruption in profit, in the case that your trade tires you and you do not make any profit, or corruption in profit and in the foundation, meaning that you lose the foundation of the trade. As we know, man does not trade except with the

intention of making profit. That is why the people of knowledge and the people who trade with Allah say, 'If you want to establish trade, then trade with the Generous One Who will grant you what you can be generous with, and after that He will reward you for it'.

That is why one of the righteous people was smiling in the face of a supplicant, and he was being friendly when he said to him: 'Welcome to the one who has come to carry my provision to the Hereafter without charging a fee'.

'Ali Allah be pleased with him was once asked ⁽¹⁾: 'O Abu Al-Hassan! I want to know myself. Am I from the people of the life of this world, or am I of the people of the Hereafter?' He said: 'If you smile at the one who gives you more than the one who takes from you, then you are from the people of the life of this world because man loves the one who builds what he loves'.

One of the Companions Allah be pleased with him told Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him 'I hate death.' The Messenger peace be upon him asked him: 'Do you have wealth?' The Companion said: 'Yes.' The Messenger peace be upon him asked: 'Do you give out from it in charity?' The Companion said: 'No.' Prophet Muhammad said: 'Indeed wealth loves its owner, and if you love it in the Hereafter then you will love to die for the Hereafter. And if you love it in the life of this world then you will love to remain with it in the life of this world.'⁽²⁾

The use of the tool of negation (*lan*) (will not) requires comment. *Lan* negates the present and the future. Because man may die before realizing the good fruits of giving, and before seeing the result of his charity His Lord puts him at ease that this trade will never fail, and its reward will wait for him in the Hereafter. His saying: 'secretly and openly' (*Fatir*: 29) means to do so in any case. As for giving out in secret, the wisdom behind this is that it distances the one doing it from ostentation and boastfulness, and it also hides the shame

(1) The story of the question of a man to one of the pious people: 'Am I among the dwellers of heaven or hell?'" and the response of 'Ali Allah be pleased with him.

(2) Mentioned by Abu-Hamid Al-Ghazali in *Ihya` 'Ulum Ad-Din* (2/232) that a man said: 'O Messenger of Allah, why do I not love death? He said: 'Do you have wealth?' He said: 'Yes, O Messenger of Allah.' He said: 'Send your wealth forward, for indeed the heart of the believer is with his wealth. If he sends it forward he will love to be with it, and if he leaves it behind he will love to stay behind with it.' Al-Hafizh Al-Iraqi said: 'I do not stand by it.'

of the one receiving it. That is why some wealthy people who wanted to show compassion to a poor or needy person, would devise a strategy to preserve the honour of this person such as hiring him to do some simple work and then giving him money as his wage for the work, not as charity. Some of them would be very polite and give to the needy in the form of a loan, all the while intending charity, and maybe this meaning is affirmed, and he said to his companion: ‘Our Lord is helping you discharge this payment but you (are consuming it).’

Some of them would give charity in the form of a trust, but say to the recipient: ‘If this amount becomes easy for you and becomes something surplus to your requirements, then give it to someone who needs it, and tell him to give it in turn to whomever needs it after him, and this is how the charity increases and reaches whomever Allah wills from those who need it.

This is about charity in secret. As for giving openly, the wisdom behind it is that it represents an impediment to one such that they are not miserly or stingy with what they have. Likewise, it safeguards the one doing it from the tongues of people and safeguards his honour in case people engross themselves with his affairs and say: ‘He is miserly even though he is wealthy’. Also, giving out openly can be considered a model and example for others to give.

The scholars say: What is intended by secret charity is that which is supererogatory, and it is better for this to be veiled. By ‘openly’ they mean obligatory charity (*zakat*) because to do things openly is what is desired in worship, as is the case with prayer, for example. The one who reflects will find that (*zakat*) is more manifest than prayer because it is easy to perform the prayer at its designated times. As for (*zakat*), you may be capable, but you are miserly and stingy in giving.

And when you spend on others who do you spend on? Do you spend on the needy who is powerless or the one who is unsuccessful? Who is the one who made him unsuccessful? Allah did, and therefore you are charged with the task of spending on the one that He has made unsuccessful, and helping him, primarily so that he does not harbour ill feelings towards you and hopes for more goodness from you because your goodness will help him. That is why we see the people in the countryside, for example, grieving and crying when

the cow of so-and-so or the buffalo of so-and-so dies. Why? This is because it was providing milk for the poor and cultivating the land of the needy.

The second wisdom is more exalted than the first, and it is that spending on the powerless makes him stay firm in his opinion of his Lord and safeguards him from opposing the preordainment of Allah, Who withholds from him and gives to others, and constricts his affair while expanding that of others.

Spending on the powerless makes him feel that he is more fortunate than the one who is wealthy, and why not when it is He who takes care of his sustenance without any exertion from him and without any fatigue? And the wealthy one comes to his door to give his right regarding Allah's wealth, and therefore the scholars say: 'The poor person is a condition for the wealthy person's faith, but the wealthy person is not a condition for the poor person's faith'. It was for this reason that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us by saying: '...a man who gives in charity and he conceals it such that his left hand does not know what his right hand is doing.'⁽¹⁾

The True Lord *Glorified is He* when He talks about those who do good and take it upon themselves to do more than what Allah has required them to do, and more of what Allah *Glorified is He* has specifically required them to do, says, '[But,] behold, the Allah-conscious will find themselves amid gardens and springs, enjoying all that their Lord will have granted them [because], verily, they were doers of good in the past: they would lie asleep during but a small part of the night, and would pray for forgiveness from their innermost hearts and [would assign] in all that they possessed a due share unto such as might ask [for help] and such as might suffer privation.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 15-19)

The 'due share' (*haqq*) is not known and it is the voluntary charity. As for the obligatory *zakat* which is the right of the poor from the wealth of the rich,

(1) Narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* (1031) from the Hadith of Abu-Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. The full Hadith is as follows: 'Seven people are shaded by Allah's shade on the Day when there is no shade but His: The just ruler, the youth who is raised in the worship of Allah, a man whose heart is attached to the mosques, two men who love each other for the sake of Allah and they meet for His sake and they part for His sake, a man who was beckoned by a woman of beauty and rank and said "I fear Allah.", a man who gives in charity and he conceals it such that his left hand does not know what his right hand is doing and a man who remembered Allah in private and his eyes overflowed with tears.'

this is mentioned in the descriptions of the believers found in the chapter of *Sa`ala*⁽¹⁾ (*al-Ma`arij*), as Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘and in whose possessions there is a due share, acknowledged [by them], for such as ask [for help] and such as are deprived [of what is good in life]’ (*al-Ma`arij*: 24-25).

So, for this reason *zakat* is not hidden but given openly because fulfilling a right that the poor have over you such that some of the jurists of Andalusia *may Allah be pleased with them* said: ‘If I were in charge of an affair over the believers, and I saw someone denying the poor person his right according to the payable amount that I had stipulated for him, I would cut his hand off.’ Consider this legal reasoning, and how they equated withholding the right of the poor with theft.

Regardless of whether the spending on others is done secretly or openly, it must be performed with a sincere intention, as our Lord teaches us in the Qudsi Hadith: ‘Sincerity is a secret from My secrets. I place it in the hearts of the slaves that I love. It does not appear to any angel so that he can write it down and neither to Satan so that he can corrupt it.’⁽²⁾

By giving, you are working with Allah, and Allah is free of need, *Glorified and Bountiful is He*. He does not diminish your right and your trade with Him *Glorified is He*; without a doubt, He will always be lucrative. That is why He says afterwards: ‘...look forward to a bargain that can never fail.’ (*Fatir*: 29)

Likewise, our Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* warned us about ostentation that can nullify our deeds, and corrupt them and prevent the one doing them from having any reward on the Day of Resurrection, and it is said to him: ‘You did it so that they would say this and that about you.’

Our Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* warned us against our deeds becoming like those of the disbelievers, of whom Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘But as for those who are bent on denying the truth, their [good] deeds are like a

(1) This is the chapter of *al-Ma`arij*, and has been called the chapter of *Sa`ala* (he asked) because it begins with His words: “‘One who is minded to ask, might ask about the suffering which [in the hereafter] is bound to befall those who deny the truth. [Know, then, that] nothing can ward it off’” (*al-Ma`arij*: 1-2).

(2) Mentioned by Imam Al-Ghazali in *Ihya` `Ulum Ad-Din* (4/271) from the Hadith of Al-Hassan Al-Basri, and it is *mursal* (discontinued). It was declared weak by Al-Hafizh Al-Iraqi and Al-Hafizh ibn-Hajar Al-`Asqalani.

mirage in the desert, which the thirsty supposes to be water – until, when he approaches it, he finds that it was nothing: instead, he finds [that] Allah [has always been present] with him, and [that] He will pay him his account in full – for Allah is swift in reckoning!’ (*an-Nur*: 39) Then Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘since He will grant them their just rewards, and give them yet more out of His Bounty...’ (*Fatir*: 30), i.e. they will take the reward of their deeds and their giving as compensation from Allah, and then He will increase them graciously from His Bounty. They say this increase is that their intercession of whom they love is accepted, and if they intercede for one of their loved ones Allah accepts their intercession. Why? Because they had previously helped the poor and needy from amongst Allah’s servants, and Allah honours them because of this and favours them as they had favoured His servants.

‘...He is Much-Forgiving, Exceedingly Grateful.’ (*Fatir*: 30). You may ask: ‘Why does this verse end with Allah’s Name the Much-Forgiving when it is discussing righteous actions such as reciting the Book of Allah, establishing the prayer, and spending on others for Allah’s sake. Which of these actions would require forgiveness?’ They say: ‘Forgiveness is mentioned here because when the servant does one of these good actions some snobbery or conceit may come in to it and this would tarnish the righteous action, so Allah forgives him for it so that he can take the full reward for it’. We have the Hadith in which our Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘O Allah! I seek refuge in you from an action with which I sought Your Face but it contained that which does not befit you.’⁽¹⁾ And His saying: ‘Exceedingly Grateful’ (*Fatir*: 30).

Shakur is the hyperbolic form of *shakir* (grateful), and Allah *the Exalted* in His Exaltedness is grateful to His slave, and indeed He goes to great lengths in His Gratitude because the servant, if we look at the apparent picture, is assisting his Lord by providing for those whom Allah has been asked to provide for. That is why Allah thanks him and does not diminish his right, even though in reality it is Allah who is helping him.

(1) Included by Ibn-Rajab Al-Hanbali in his book, *Jami` Al-`Ulum Wa Al-Hikam* (p.27), from the supplication of Matraf ibn-`Abdullah, saying: ‘O Allah! I seek Your forgiveness for that which I repented to You for, and then returned to it. I seek Your forgiveness for that which I made for You upon myself, and then I did not fulfil it. And I seek Your forgiveness for that which I claimed I had done seeking Your Face but my heart mixed in with it that which I did not know.’

When you read: ‘...He is Much-Forgiving, Exceedingly Grateful’ (*Fatir*: 30), you know that Allah *the Exalted* is thanking you and all you can do is thank Him *Glorified is He* and then He will give you more of His blessings. We are therefore standing before everlasting gratitude that will never be cut off and giving that will never be depleted

وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا
بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِعِبَادِهِ لَخَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٣١﴾

The Scripture We have revealed to you [Prophet] is the Truth and confirms the scriptures that preceded it. Allah is well informed about His servants, He sees everything [31]
(The Quran, *Fatir*: 31)

Wahi (Inspiration) in its general meaning is to state something secretly. If it is done outwardly and openly it is not considered inspiration. If you, for example, had a group of guests at your house you could merely look at your servant and he would understand what you want without anyone noticing you. This is considered *wahi*. Likewise, the *wahi*, meaning the revelation, does not come openly. It is a concealed matter between Allah *the Exalted* and His Messenger *peace be upon him*.

Wahi is different depending on who is giving it, whom it is being given to and what is being given. Allah gives *wahi* to inanimate objects, as He did to the earth: ‘as you Lord will have inspired her to do’ (*az-Zalzala*: 5), and He gave *wahi* to the bee: ‘and [consider how] you Lord has inspired the bee: “Prepare for yourself dwellings in mountains...”’ (*an-Nahl*: 68). He also gave *wahi* to human beings without messengers: ‘...We inspired [thus] the mother of Musa (Moses): “Suckle him...”’ (*al-Qasas*: 7), as He gave *wahi* to the disciples of `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*.

As for the revelation *wahi* that has to do with commandments, this is *wahi* from Allah and it is addressed to the messengers along with a method for them to communicate it from Allah. It is not just an idea or an inspiration like the aforementioned *wahi*.

Wahi also includes that which the devils give to their associates. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘...and, verily, the devils whisper unto those who

have made them their own that they should involve you in argument [as to what is and what is not a sin]; and if you pay heed unto them, lo! You will become [like] those who ascribe divinity to other beings or forces beside Allah' (*al-An'am*: 121), and His saying: 'and [know that] all of the Book with which We have inspired you...' (*Fatir*: 31), i.e. from the Quran, or from the Preserved Tablet is '...the very truth...' (*Fatir*: 31), i.e. the Quran is the epitome of truth. We already know from our grammar lessons that the subject is always definite because you are going to give it a predicate. You can not give a predicate to something that is unknown. For example, you say, 'Zayd is diligent'. Zayd is known to you and you have given him the predicate of being diligent. Therefore, the predicate is that which is not known and that is why it is always indefinite. If you said: 'Zayd is the diligent one', this would mean that he has acquired diligence to such an extent that the attribute of diligence can only be applied to him.

Likewise, in His saying: '...the very truth...' (*Fatir*: 31), i.e. the attribute of truth can only be applied to it, and it is the epitome of truth. The truth is that which is firmly established and does not change and neither is it inconsistent. In case someone misunderstands and thinks that as long as the Quran is the truth all of the previous books must be false, Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...confirming the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations...' (*Fatir*: 31). For the Quran is true and it confirms the divine books that preceded it, as they are also true because the Quran confirms them and does not contradict them.

In another place Allah *the Exalted* says, '...determining what is true therein...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 48). It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* is giving the Quran the force of being the final seal for the perfection of humanity, for if we have a ruling from the previous books and then a ruling from the Quran is revealed, we take the latter because it has abrogated the former for a benefit that is required by the age and the nature of the commandments that are graduated according to the states of nations.

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* was distinguishing His Messenger *peace be upon him* with a distinction that was not fulfilled for any of the other messengers, and it is that the previous messengers were conveying to their

nations what had been revealed to them, but Allah allowed Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him* to convey from Allah and authorised him to legislate for his people. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...Hence, accept [willingly] whatever the Apostle gives you [thereof], and refrain from what he forbids you...’ (*al-Hashr*: 7). This verse is a refutation of those who say that you should follow the Quran but not the *Sunna*. This ancient and modern falsehood that we hear people calling to from time to time; these people do not know that the text of the Quran forces them to follow the *Sunna* and respect it since it clarifies the Quran and explains it, and elucidates what it contains. If not, then what do they have to say about His words: ‘...Hence, accept [willingly] whatever the Apostle gives you [thereof], and refrain from [demanding] anything that he withholds from you...’ (*al-Hashr*: 7)?

If I were to ask you: ‘Is there an article in our constitution that stipulates the dismissal of an employee if he is absent from work for fifteen days?’ This article is not in the constitution, but it is a law that was set by a group of specialists who were authorised to do so such that a committee was formed for civil servants and those who work in the government so that laws could be set by authorisation, and likewise the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was authorised by His Lord *the Exalted* to legislate for his nation and make things clear for them.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...for, behold, of [the needs of] His servants Allah is Fully Aware, All Seeing.’ (*Fatir*: 31) The Fully Aware refers to the One Who knows the secrets of all things as they really are. The All Seeing refers to the One from Whom nothing is hidden and not even a mustard seed is concealed from him, for you may know something but not see it. The True Lord *Glorified is He* brings the Fully Aware and the All Seeing together many times in the Quran, as in this verse⁽¹⁾, or the Subtle

(1) Likewise, His statement: ‘And how many a generation have We [thus] destroyed after [the time of] Nuh (Noah)! For none has the like of you Lord’s Awareness and Insight into His creatures’ sins.’ (*al-Isra*: 17), and His statement: ‘Behold, your Lord grants abundant sustenance, or gives it in scant measure, unto whomever He wills: verily, Fully Aware is He of [the needs of] His creatures, and sees them all.’ (*al-Isra*: 30) and His statement: ‘Say, “None can bear witness between me and you as Allah does: verily, Fully Aware is He of His creatures, and He Sees all [that is in their hearts].”’ (*al-Isra*: 96).

and the Aware⁽¹⁾ because awareness requires sight, and sight requires subtlety. The Subtle, as we have said, is the one who Penetrates deeply into things and no one prevents him. That is why we say: 'Indeed, the most violent and destructive of things are the subtle tiny things that can' not be seen by just the eye and for some time now we have been calling them microbes'. Now we have the virus, and I believe it is more subtle and tinier than the microbe, and it is more destructive.

We have clarified this matter by using the example of someone who builds a house and he wants to keep harmful animals and insects out, so he puts iron netting, for example, on the windows. However, this netting must be made to suit the subtlety of the thing that you fear. That which keeps out a wolf will not keep out rats, and that which keeps out rats will not keep out flies and mosquitoes, etc.

Therefore, the tinier something is the harder it is to catch and the more cautious one has to be because it penetrates deeply into the most constricted of things and reaches you without you noticing it.

We understand from His saying: '...for, behold, of [the needs of] His servants Allah is Fully Aware, All Seeing' (*Fatir*: 31), that it is only Allah *the Exalted* who is capable of legislating for His servants what is appropriate for them in every time and place. That is why there were various divine books for differing maladies, but when people of the world began to make contact and communicate with one another the Quran came to determine the truth of what remains in those books.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

(1) The Subtle and the All Seeing are found together many times in the Quran: 'No human vision can encompass Him, whereas He encompasses all human vision: for He alone is Unfathomable, All Aware.' (*al-An'am*: 103); 'are you not aware that it is Allah who sends down water from the skies, whereupon the earth becomes green? Verily, Allah is Unfathomable [in His wisdom], All Aware.' (*al-Hajj*: 63); "'O my dear son"(continued *Luqman*), "verily, though there be aught of but the weight of a mustard-seed, and though it be [hidden] in a rock, or in the skies, or in the earth, Allah will bring it to light: for, behold, Allah is Unfathomable [in His wisdom], All Aware.'" (*Luqman* 16) and 'How could it be that He who has created [all] should not know [all]? Yes! He alone is Unfathomable [in His wisdom], All Aware!' (*al-Mulk*: 14)

ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ إِذْنِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ ﴿٣٢﴾

We gave the Scripture as a heritage to Our chosen servants: some of them wronged their own souls, some stayed between [right and wrong], and some, by Allah's leave, were foremost in good deeds. That is the greatest favour [32] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 32)

The 'Book' is the Quran. Therefore, this inheritance was after our Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and it is evidence that the phase after the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* is the phase of inheriting the Book and the *Sunnah*. The scholars inherit it from the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'The scholars are the inheritors of the prophets, and the scholars do not leave *dinars* and *dirhams* as inheritance, but rather, they leave knowledge, and whoever takes it has taken much good.'⁽¹⁾

The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was the one conveying and teaching during his life, but after his death Allah passed this duty on to the scholars. The meaning of '...We have bestowed...as a heritage...' (*Fatir*: 32) is that we asked them to do with it what someone would do if they had inherited money because the one who inherits money will put it towards something of general benefit, and this is also the objective of the Message. Allah *the Exalted* says, 'And thus have We willed you to be a community of the middle way, so that [with your lives] you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you...' (*al-Baqara*: 143); so we are the inheritors of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and whoever learns a ruling from him must convey it, for the Messenger *peace be upon him* is a witness to whoever it is conveyed to and likewise his nation will be witnesses to the people that they convey it to.

The meaning of '...We chose...' (*Fatir*: 32) is that Allah selected and preferred over all the other nations. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* divides these people into three categories: '...and among them are some who sin against

(1) Narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (5/196), Ibn-Majah in his *Sunnan* (232) and Abu Dawud in his *Sunnan* (2641) from the Hadith of Abu-Darda' Allah be pleased with him.

themselves...' (*Fatir*: 32). They sin against themselves by neglecting their duty towards the book that they have inherited, and they do not act with it as they should act. Indeed, they may commit enormities, and we seek refuge with Allah from such a thing.

This category wrongs itself, because it denies itself reward. Every commandment requires that you do something easy, and you are rewarded abundantly in return, so when you are neglectful regarding something that is easy to do then you are, without a doubt, wronging yourself.

And '...some who keep halfway [between right and wrong] ...' (*Fatir*: 32) mean is that they act some of the time, so they mix righteous acts with others that are sinful.

And '...some who, by Allah's leave, are foremost in deeds of goodness...' (*Fatir*: 32). May Allah make us from amongst them. The word *sabiq* (foremost) indicates that there is a contest and a competition, i.e. those who compete to arrive at an objective before anyone else, and the people of this category are competing in good deeds.

His saying '...We chose...' (*Fatir*: 32) indicates that proclaiming Allah's Oneness (*tawhid*) has a price, belief in Allah's Messenger *peace be upon him* has a price and acting in accordance with what Allah's Messenger *peace be upon him* has a price. And if there are amongst these chosen people some who oppress themselves due to negligence or indeed by committing sins, they are still considered to be amongst the chosen ones because they say that there is no god but Allah, and the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not equate between those who accept this word and those who reject it. 'There is no god but Allah' is my fortress. Whoever says it enters my fortress.'⁽¹⁾

The True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions that these believers who have inherited the book have two attributes: '...of Our servants as We chose...' (*Fatir*: 32); he describes them as being chosen and as being His servants.

Therefore, the Book was revealed to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his nation inherited the book after him, and it is the spreading of

(1) Narrated by Ibn`Asakir in what is mentioned by his Encyclopaedia of Sections of the Hadith (2/82), Tahdhib Tarikh Dimashq

his message. That is why Allah has entrusted this nation with conveying the way of Allah to all of mankind until the Hour is established, and no one other than us has been entrusted with this.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* has indeed taken it upon Himself to preserve this Book, and he did not entrust anyone else to preserve it as is the case with the books that preceded the Quran, and as Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...Verily, it is We who bestowed from on high the Torah, wherein there was guidance and light. On its strength did the prophets, who had surrendered themselves unto Allah, deliver judgment unto those who followed the Jewish faith; and so did the [early] men of Allah and the rabbis, inasmuch as some of Allah’s scripture had been entrusted to their care; and they [all] bore witness to its truth. Therefore, [O Children of Israel,] hold not men in awe, but stand in awe of Me...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 44).

The meaning of ‘...entrusted to their care...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 44) is that they were asked to preserve it, but they were negligent and forgot some of the verses, changed some of them and concealed others. Indeed, some of them came up with their own words and claimed that they were from Allah, but because the Quran is the final Book Allah is preserving it Himself, and He has not entrusted anyone else to preserve it.

If you ask: ‘How can the one who wrongs himself be from the chosen ones when he is committing sins and possibly major sins?’ We say: ‘By the simple fact that the servant says, “I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger,” so he is chosen, and with these words Allah has chosen him over the disbelievers, even if he disobeys after that’.

When The True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions a sin and makes it a crime he decrees a punishment for it, and it is an indication that such a thing will take place. For example, Allah has declared theft to be a crime and He has decreed a legal punishment for it. He has declared fornication to be a crime and He decreed a legal punishment for it. This indicates that such things do take place in a Muslim society. As for lying, for example, there is no legal punishment and no penalty. We find in a Hadith that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked: ‘Does a believer fornicate, O Messenger of Allah?’ He said ‘Yes’.

‘Does a believer steal, O Messenger of Allah?’ He said ‘Yes’. ‘Does a believer lie, O Messenger of Allah?’ He said ‘No’.⁽¹⁾

It is as if fornication and stealing are to be expected from the believer, but lying is not expected from him. It is the furthest attribute from a believer. Why? They say: Because lying contradicts and goes against reality, and the believer does not lie because he says that there is no god but Allah. If he is a liar then how do we know that he is truthful when he says these words? It is as if lying destroys faith at its foundation. That is why Allah has not decreed a punishment for it because it is not conceived as an act of a believer.

Those who keep halfway are those whose good deeds equal their bad deeds, and mix righteous acts with other acts that are sinful. In another place Allah *the Exalted* says regarding this category: ‘and [there are] others – [people who] have become conscious of their sinning after having done righteous deeds side by side with evil ones; [and] it may well be that Allah will accept their repentance: for, verily, Allah is Much-Forgiving, a Dispenser of Mercy.’ (*at-Tawba*: 102) The grammarians say that the word *‘asa* (perhaps) indicates hope, and hope is mostly expectation and the possibility of something happening, as opposed to *laita* (if only) which is used for a wish. A wish is for something that is farfetched or impossible, and it is only an expression of love for the thing for which it is wished. It does not indicate hope. We have the words of the poet:

If only youth would return one day
so that I would inform it of what old age does⁽²⁾

We have already said that ‘perhaps’ indicates hope that something will be done, except that hope has levels and degrees some of which are more reliable than others. For example, if you had hope in a human being like you and you

(1) Narrated by Imam Malik in his *Muwatta` from the Hadith of Safwan ibn-Salim and classified as mursals*

(2) Most sources agree that this verse comes from Abu Al-`Atahiyah, and it is attributed to him by Al-Hafizh in *Al-Bayan Wa At-Tabyin Kitab Al-`Asa*, and also Abu-Hilal Al-`Askari in his book, *Diwan Al-Ma`ani* in the chapter on Youth and Old age and Ar-Raghib Al-Asfahani in *Muhadarat Al-Udaba`*, but Az-Zuzani attributed it to Hatim At-Ta`i in *Hamasat Ath-Zhurafa`*, in the chapter on Old Age and Seniority.

said: 'Perhaps he will give me'. This is hope at a specific level in terms of the possibility of it being realised. If you said: 'Perhaps I will give you' in the first person, this is stronger and more reliable than the first. If you said: 'Perhaps Allah will give you' then this is the most reliable because it is hope in Allah. Allah *Glorified is He* says, '... [and] it may well be that Allah will accept their repentance...' (*at-Tawba*: 102). 'Perhaps' here is for hope that is realised. Therefore, this is one of the most hopeful verses that those who keep halfway and are negligent in their duty to Allah wait for.

As for the one who competes in good deeds, he is the one who carries out a command and completes it, and does it in the most perfect of ways. Allah *the Exalted* says, '...let all such aspire as [are willing to] aspire to things of high account.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 26)

Consider, for example, what Allah *the Exalted* says regarding Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: 'and [remember this:] when his Lord tried Ibrahim (Abraham) by [His] commandments and the latter fulfilled them...' (*al-Baqara*: 124).

This means that he fulfilled the commands primarily with conventional strength and then with mental strength and force. When Allah commanded him, for example, to raise the foundations of the House: 'and when Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) were raising the foundations of the House...' (*al-Baqara*: 127), what did He ask from him? What did he do? He told him to raise the foundations of the House, and in obeying this command, it would have been sufficient for him to build the foundations as high as his hands could reach, but he went beyond that and used his mental capacity. After he had fulfilled the command and carried it out he wanted to do more, and beautify the act beyond what had been required from him, so he brought a huge stone to use as a scaffold and he stood on it so that he could raise the building as high as the stone would allow him, and his son Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* was helping him.

Likewise, in his youth, when he was tested with being burned, he was patient and trusted in Allah. When Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* came and offered help, and he is the mediator between him and his Lord, he refused and

said, 'as for you, no' meaning, 'You connect me to Allah but you are not considered a mediator between me and my Lord'.

This is something amazing; a high level of faith and trust in Allah that leaves no room for any doubt or misgiving. That is why Allah saved him and suspended the norm for him. For his sake the law that fire burns was nullified: '...O fire! Be you cool, and [a source of] inner peace for Ibrahim (Abraham)!' (*al-Anbiya*: 69)

Consider the caution from the Lord of the command: '...O fire! Be you cool, and [a source of] inner peace...' (*al-Anbiya*: 69). That is why the scholars say that had the command been 'be cold' only, then it would have become lethally cold for him, possibly more severe than fire.

It should also be considered that this test happened to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* himself when he was still young, before he had children, he only had to worry about his own wellbeing. When he is blessed with a son, his main concern becomes the wellbeing of his son, and he loves him more than he loves himself, and he desires to give to his son what he could not do for himself. That is why they say that man does not like to have anyone preferred over him except for his son. Therefore, man's devotion in loving his son is more than his devotion to himself.

Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* after succeeding in his own personal test, Allah tested him with his son, and you know that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was given a son by Allah when he was old and had given up on having children. Then Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* came after long yearning from Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. The boy became a young man and reached the age at which he was old enough to assist his father, and then the command came from Allah that he should slaughter him. This command came in a dream, and dreams are open to interpretation, but Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* did not interpret and took it literally.

This test actually consists of four tests. The first is that he is to slaughter the son that came in old age and after a long wait. The second is that he is not being slaughtered by someone else such that this person would become an enemy to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. The third is that he is to slaughter

him with his own hands. The fourth is that his son is to participate with him in this test and he cannot take him by surprise.

When Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was concerned with carrying out what he had been commanded to do he refused to take his son by surprise for a number of reasons. The first is so that he would not be accused of being harsh and hard-hearted. The second is so that his son does not have a different opinion of his father and accuse him of something that does not befit him. The third is so that his son can participate with him in the test and share in the reward, and in being pleased with Allah's judgement. That' is why he said to him: '...O my dear son! I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you: consider, then, what would be your view!...' (*as-Saffat*: 102)

It is as if he was seeking his opinion in the matter: '...O my father! Do as you are commanded...' (*as-Saffat*: 102). He did not say, for example 'Do what you want' because this is submission and obedience to the command of Allah *Glorified is He*: '...you will find me, if Allah so wills, among those who are patient in adversity.' (*as-Saffat*: 102)

This is how the two of them shared in the (Divine) pleasure, and in patience and in the reward. Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* grabbed victory in this test at the last moment, and this is why Allah *the Exalted* says, 'But as soon as the two had surrendered themselves...' (*as-Saffat*: 103), the son and his father '...and [Ibrahim (Abraham)] had laid him down on his face' (*as-Saffat*: 103) meaning that he intended to slaughter him, or he was about to do it: 'We called out to him: "O Ibrahim (Abraham)! You hast already fulfilled [the purpose of] that dream-vision!" Thus, verily, do We reward the doers of good: for, behold, all this was indeed a trial, clear in itself. And We ransomed him with a tremendous sacrifice.' (*as-Saffat*: 104 – 107)

When you reflect on this story, you find that The True Lord *Glorified is He* received these four tests with four gifts: He saved Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* from being slaughtered. He redeemed him with a tremendous sacrifice. Then He gave Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* the glad tidings of Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon him* and from Ishaq (Isaac) came Ya'qub (Jacob) *peace be upon him* and then He made all of them prophets as a bounty from Allah.

Allah says ‘... [and] this, indeed, is a merit most high!’ (*Fatir*: 32) Yes, the True Lord *Glorified is He* is treating us with great virtue and He is giving us examples to make us love the religion. A good deed with Him is rewarded tenfold, or He increases it to seven hundred times, multiplying it over and over again, but a bad deed is treated like for like.

If one’s good deeds outweigh one’s bad deeds, then paradise is hoped for him, and if one’s bad deeds outweigh one’s good deeds, then he waits for the command of Allah. If He wills He will punish him out of His justice and make paradise his final destination and if He wills He will forgive him out of His Grace, and if he rushes to make sincere and heartfelt repentance, Allah will turn his bad deeds into good deeds.

We even have some witty people who say: ‘If only I were of the people who commit major sins’. The knowers of Allah supplicate: ‘O Allah! Treat us with grace and not with justice. Treat us with beneficence and not with the scale, and treat us with a smaller test and not with reckoning’.

Our Lord treats us with grace as is evidenced by the fact that He includes the one who wrongs himself and the one who keeps halfway amongst those of His servants that are chosen.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* clarifies for us this great virtue by saying:

جَنَّتٌ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ
مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَلُؤْلُؤًا وَلِبَاسُهُمْ فِيهَا حَرِيرٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

**They will enter lasting Gardens where they will
be adorned with bracelets of gold and pearls,
where they will wear silk garments [33]
(The Quran, *Fatir*: 33)**

You notice that ‘...gardens...’ (*Fatir*: 33) is plural because there are numerous gardens, not just one. Gardens (of perpetual bliss) mean that they are permanently established and never-ending. These gardens are described with permanence because Adam *peace be upon him* had previously been admitted into the garden,

but he left⁽¹⁾. As for the gardens of the Hereafter, they are permanent and everlasting and whoever enters paradise will never leave.

In His saying: ‘...will they enter, therein to be adorned with many bracelets of gold and pearls...’ (*Fatir*: 33), you notice that the True Lord *Glorified is He* has mentioned the embellishments and adornments before the necessities, and this means that the necessities have already been taken care of. In the Hereafter, this embellishing will be of gold and silk, and this is prohibited for men in the life of this world, but in the Hereafter, it is something else.

The word bracelets is a broken plural that indicates more than ten and you will be adorned, if Allah so wills, in paradise with several bracelets that will cover your arm from the wrist all the way to the shoulder. It is known that a bracelet is used to adorn the wrist and women in the life of this world wear it to beautify themselves. Everything is according to what is possible such that some wealthy women wear expensive bracelets on their upper arm called *dumluk* (bangles) because of their extravagance.

It is amazing that we see some men receiving the ornamentation of the Hereafter ahead of its time but by other than the proper means. They wear bracelets; what are now called *al-insiyal*.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* has mentioned bracelets of gold as ornamentation because ancient kings used to wear them and adorn themselves with them. Khosrau had two bracelets, which have a story⁽²⁾ in history. When Suraqa ibn Malik⁽³⁾ became Muslim, he was very thin and his arms were like a goat’s legs⁽⁴⁾, and some of the Companions used to make fun of him. Prophet Muhammad *peace and*

(1) From Proofreader: This information is per the knowledge and belief of Sheikh Ash-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) *The story of Suraqa ibn-Malik with Khosrau’s bracelets.*

(3) *He is Suraqa ibn-Malik ibn-Ja’shim Al-Madlaji Al-Kinani, Abu-Sufyan, a Companion and was a tracker of footprints before Islam. Abu-Sufyan sent him out to track the traces of the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him when he left for the cave with Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him. He became Muslim after the siege of At-Ta’if in the year 8 A.H. Nineteen Hadiths are attributed to him in the books of Hadith and he died in the year 24 A.H. Al-’Alam by Az-Zirikli, 2/80*

(4) *Abu’Abdullah Al-Husairi mentions in his book, Ar-Rawd Al-Mi’tar Fi Akhbar Al-Aqtar, whilst relating this incident, that Suraqa was a man who had a lot of hair on his forearms.*

blessings be upon him forbade them and said something the meaning of which would only be known afterwards: 'How, when these – Suraqa's arms – will be wearing Khosrau's bracelets?'

The Muslims conquered Persia and gathered the spoils from Khosrau's palaces and wealth and when the spoils were distributed the two bracelets were given to Suraqa. When 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* saw them in his hands he said: 'The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* spoke truthfully.'⁽¹⁾ These bracelets are '...of gold and pearls...' (*Fatir*: 33), and we know that gold comes from mountains, whilst pearls are from the finery of the oceans.

Consider the precision of the Quranic rendition. When it talks about bracelets it employs the plural form that indicates more than ten, but when it talks about clothes it says: '...and therein to be clad in raiment of silk.' (*Fatir*: 33) employing the singular form. Why? Because you do not need several clothes unless you have to protect yourself from cold or heat, and there is none of this in paradise, and they will say:

وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزْنَ إِنَّكَ رَبَّنَا لَغَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

**They will say, 'Praise be to Allah, who has
separated us from all sorrow! Our Lord is truly
most forgiving, most appreciative [34]
(The Quran, *Fatir*: 34)**

This is what the believers say when they are enjoying the blessings of paradise, for they do not forget the Giver of blessings *Glorified is He*. They praise Him, first because He legislated for them the way and brought them to this blessing. They praise Him because He granted them salvation, saved them from disbelief, and guided them to faith. Therefore, this praise is manifold.

(1) Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi in *Dala'il An-Nubuwwa* (6/325) from the Hadith of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* that the fur of Khosrau was brought to him and placed in front of him and Suraqa ibn-Malik was amongst the people and he said 'Give him the bracelets of Khosrau ibn-Hormazd and he put them on his hands and they reached his shoulders. When he saw them on the hands of Suraqa he said, 'Praise be to Allah, the bracelets of Khosrau ibn-Hormazd are in the hand of Suraqa ibn-Malik.'. Ash-Shafi'i said Suraqa only wore them because the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said 'Suraqa' and looked at his arms: 'It is as if I am seeing you wearing the bracelets of Khosrau.'

The phrase ‘...all praise is due to Allah...’ (*Fatir*: 34) is the last thing that those who are blessed will say in the Hereafter, as Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...and their call will close with [the words] “All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds!”’ (*Yunus*: 10)

It is from Allah’s subtlety and affection towards His slaves that He teaches them how to praise Him *Glorified is He* and He teaches them this concise phrase that consists of a subject and a predicate: all praise is due to Allah. This is because people differ in their capacity for rhetoric and eloquence. Some people are very eloquent and well spoken, and can beautify their speech, whilst others are not able to do so at all. That is why Allah has taught us how to praise Him, with an utterance that is easy and simple for all.

This is also why the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* when conversing intimately with his Lord, would say: ‘...I cannot enumerate praise upon You. You are as You have praised Yourself.’⁽¹⁾

We say that the phrase ‘All praise is due to Allah’ necessitates a never-ending sequence of praise. When you say, ‘all praise is due to Allah’ for a blessing the praise itself is a blessing that necessitates further praise, and it deserves praise, and this how the True Lord *Glorified is He* continues to be praised and the slave continues to praise, endlessly.

His saying: ‘...who has caused all sorrow to leave us...’ (*Fatir*: 34) refers to the third blessing that deserves praise, for praise, primarily, is for blessings. Secondly, it is because you have praised Allah for His blessings and thirdly it is because Allah has removed sadness from you. *Huzn* (sadness) is everything that grieves or distresses you, or it is the persistence of man’s sadness.

Man is happy and joyous about the blessings in the life of this world, but he is worried because he is scared of losing them. He lives in an anxious and distressed state, fearing that the blessings will desert him or that he will desert them by way of death. In the Hereafter people don not think about these

(1) Narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* (486) from the Hadith of `Aisha Allah be pleased with her who said: ‘One night I realised that Allah’s Messenger *peace be upon him* was not in bed, so I looked for him and my hand fell upon the soles of his feet whilst he was in prostration, and they were raised. He said: “O Allah! I seek refuge in Your pleasure from your wrath, and in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate praise upon you. You are as you have praised yourself.”’

things at all. Thoughts like this disappear when the life of this world disappears, as the reward in the Hereafter is permanent and everlasting. It will not desert you and you will not desert it.

And their saying: '...our Lord is indeed Much-Forgiving, Exceedingly Grateful' (*Fatir*: 34) is as if they are accusing themselves of inadequacy; they have not given Allah His right as is befitting to Him. The blessings that they have are only because their Lord is Much Forgiving and He overlooks their inadequacy, and He is Grateful; He thanks them for their righteous action even though He helped them and enabled them to do it.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions their being established in the blessing that He has granted them. He says:

الَّذِي أَحَلَّنَا دَارَ الْمَقَامَةِ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ لَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَلَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا لُغُوبٌ ﴿٣٥﴾

**He has, in His bounty, settled us in the everlasting
Home where no toil or fatigue will touch us [35]
(The Quran, *Fatir*: 35)**

The phrase '...has made us alight...' (*Fatir*: 35) means that He has admitted us and made it a dwelling for us. It is an '...abode of life enduring...' (*Fatir*: 35), i.e. the everlasting abode, which is paradise. Paradise is the everlasting abode. As for the life of this world, it is merely a bridge to the Hereafter, so it is not considered an enduring abode. This paradise that Allah has made as a dwelling for them is not because of their deeds. Rather, it is only out of Allah's Bounty and Kindness. If you have any righteous action it is only because Allah decreed it for you, so all of it goes back to Allah's Bounty.

Their saying: '...wherein no struggle can assail us...' (*Fatir*: 35) means that in paradise, there will be no difficulty or discomfort. '...and wherein no weariness can touch us' (*Fatir*: 35) refers to the fatigue and lassitude they experience from the moving of equipment. Man suffers in his efforts for the life of this world and is exposed to a lot of difficulties such that we say, 'he strikes the earth' which means that he strives as if it is an exhausting and burdensome process from which man returns exhausted and tired. This is weariness until one finds rest from it and relaxes. Then your strength and energy comes back to you and you can work again.

Another example of this meaning is His words: ‘and [who knows that] We have indeed created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six days, and [that] no weariness could ever touch Us.’ (*Qaf*: 38)

Some of them say that *nasab* (struggle) is the tiredness of the limbs, while *lughub* (weariness) is the tiredness of the hearts, and what they mean by this is the anxiety that occupies man’s mind. The poet Shawqi *Allah rest his soul* said the following about this meaning:

a burden is not what the back can bear
a burden is only what is in the heart

When⁽¹⁾ ‘Ali *Allah be pleased with him* was asked about the strongest of Allah’s soldiers on earth. He replied: ‘Distress, for indeed it takes hold of man, makes him anxious and deprives him of sleep.’ That is why they said: ‘anxiety overcomes sleep, because it is stronger than it’⁽²⁾, and this anxiety persists until man becomes gaunt after being corpulent, as Al-Mutanabbi⁽³⁾ said:

Anxiety seizes⁽⁴⁾ the corpulent and makes him gaunt
And it makes the youth’s head go grey, and makes him decrepit

(1) *The story of asking ‘Ali ibn Abu Taleb Allah be pleased with him about the strongest soldiers of Allah*

(2) *Mentioned by Abu-‘Ali Al-Qali in Dhayl Al-Amali Wa An-Nawadir (2: 193) that ‘Ali ibn-Abu Taleb Allah be pleased with him said: ‘The strongest of your Lord’s soldiers are ten: the unshakable mountains, the iron that cuts the mountains, the fire that melts the iron, the water that puts out the fire, the clouds placed between the sky and the earth that bring water, the wind that cuts through the clouds, and the son of Adam overcomes the wind by covering himself with a garment or something else and he carries out his need, intoxication overcomes the son of Adam and sleep overcomes intoxication, and anxiety overcomes sleep, so the strongest of Allah’s creation is anxiety.’*

(3) Al-Mutanabbi is Ahmad ibn Al-Hussain ibn Al-Hassan Al-Kindi, also known as Abu At-Tayyib, born in *Kufa* in 303 A.H. He wise poet whose lineage goes back to *Kinda* in *Al-Kufa*. He was raised in Greater Syria. He recited poetry as a boy and he claimed prophecy in the desert of Samawa and this is why he is called Al-Mutanabbi (the one who claims prophecy), but he repented and rejected being called this. He wrote poetry in praise of Kafur Al-Ikshidi in Egypt and then wrote poetry lampooning him. He also wrote poetry in praise of ‘Adu Ad-Dawla ibn-Buwayh in Shiraz. He was murdered in 354 A.H.

(4) The actual wording is ‘anxiety destroys’ as it is in the *Diwan* of Al-Mutanabbi from a poem he has in a complete metre *Bahr Al-Kamil* which consists of 26 verses, and the most famous verses in this poem are:

The possessor of intellect is miserable, even in paradise, by his intellect and his ignorant brother in distress lives carefree

After the True Lord *Glorified is He* has told us about the people of faith who are chosen from His servants, their reward in the gardens of perpetual bliss in which the soul rejoices and the glad tidings of the pious; Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the opposite, i.e. the warnings for the foolish. Mentioning the opposite makes the meaning clearer and it is one of the features of Quranic discourse. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Behold, [in the life to come] the truly virtuous will indeed be in bliss, whereas, behold, the wicked will indeed be in a blazing fire.’ (*al-Infitar*: 13-14), and: ‘Let them, then, laugh a little – for they will weep a lot in return for what they have earned.’ (*at-Tawba*: 82)

Allah says:

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ لَا يُقْضَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ فِيمَوْتُ وَلَا يُخَفَّفُ
عَنْهُمْ مِنْ عَذَابِهَا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي كُلَّ كَافِرٍ ﴿٣٦﴾

But those who reject the truth will stay in Hellfire, where they will neither be finished off by death, nor be relieved from Hell’s torment: this is how We reward hardened disbelievers [36] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 36)

His saying ‘...the fire of Hell awaits them...’ (*Fatir*: 36) means that they own it and it is their jurisdiction. For example, when we say that so and so has such and such, as if they are attached to it, and it is attached to them in a relationship of owner and owned. The moment they enter it, and we seek refuge in Allah, they will wish they could get out of it, even by way of death, as the poet said:

It suffices you as a malady that you see death as a cure

What agony can be harder than wishing for death?⁽¹⁾

Yes, they desire liberation, even by way of death, but this is completely out of the question. This understanding is clear in another verse: ‘and they will cry: “O you [angel] who rules [over hell]! Let you Lord put an end to us!” – [whereupon] he will reply: “Verily, you must live on [in this state]”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 77) because death is not a punishment, but rather for them, it is relief from a punishment that is more severe and longer lasting.

(1) This is also a verse of Al-Mutanabbi and it is the opening line of a poem in his *Diwan*; part of a long metre, that consists of 47 verses.

I want to mention that some justices claim that the Book of Allah does not contain any evidence for stoning a free married woman who commits fornication, and they infer this from His saying regarding slave girls: ‘...they shall be liable to half the penalty to which free married women are liable...’ (*an-Nisa*: 25). They say that because the act of stoning is not divisible; there cannot be a half of stoning, so as long as stoning is indivisible then stoning cannot be. Our Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* inspired us and we said, ‘all praise is for Allah’. We must first define what punishment is. Punishment means to cause pain to a living thing. If we gather together the verses in the Quran that deal with this issue then we have a clearer picture and a fuller understanding. In the story of Sulaiman’s (Solomon’s) hoopoe, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘[If so,] I will punish him most severely or kill him...’ (*an-Naml*: 21). Therefore death, slaughter, or killing is not a punishment. Stoning is a means of causing death, and to cause death is to terminate punishment.

In this verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to make something clear to His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* by way of this verse, and He distinguished between a ruling that is based on a text and a ruling that is based on the legislator’s practical application because you can interpret a text, but you cannot interpret the Prophet’s practical application, and it has been established that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* did practice stoning.

And if the case was as the justice claims then the verse would be: ‘they shall be liable to half of that which free married women are liable’ without any punishment being mentioned. His saying: ‘...the penalty...’ (*an-Nisa*: 25) means that it cannot be anything else. It is a clarification of what the half refers to, and it is a half of the punishment, but stoning is not punishment but rather a termination of punishment.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* told us about the state of the people of the fire: ‘...nor shall any of the suffering caused by that (fire) be lightened for them’ (*Fatir*: 36). It is a permanent punishment that will not cease or be mitigated. We seek refuge in Allah *Glorified is He* from such punishments, but a man may be tested in the life of this world by being arrested and beaten. He may become accustomed to the pain, to an extent, that his body may become numb. At that point, he may start feeling less pain with the same painful stimuli. People who are

daily whipped with a lash, or many lashes, may feel the pain dwindling as more time passes. An Arab poet described this phenomenon truthfully when he said:

‘Whoever is insignificant finds shame bearable,
Wounding a corpse does not cause any pain.’⁽¹⁾

Another poet also said:

‘I was struck with many arrows,
While arrowheads broke the other arrowheads’⁽²⁾

Therefore, punishment may be mitigated in the life of this world. This is a result of a process known as habituation, which is the inability to feel repetitive and chronic stimuli, such as pain. This resembles the skin losing its connection to the brain. However, the punishment of the Hereafter will not be mitigated for the disbelievers, regardless of its period. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: ‘For, verily, We shall cause those who denied the truth of Our messages to endure fire: (and) every time their skins are burnt off, We shall replace them with new skins, so that they may taste the suffering (in full). Verily, Allah is Almighty and Wise.’ (*an-Nisa*: 56) Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَهُمْ يَصْطَرِخُونَ فِيهَا رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ أَوَلَمْ نَعْمَرْكُمْ
مَا يَتَذَكَّرُ فِيهِ مَنْ تَذَكَّرَ وَجَاءَكُمُ النَّذِيرُ فَذُوقُوا فَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ نَصِيرٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

They will cry out loud in Hell, ‘Lord, let us out, and we will do righteous deeds, not what we did before!’ – ‘Did We not give you a life long enough to take warning if you were going to? The warner came to you, now taste the punishment.’ The evildoers will have nobody to help them [37] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 37)

The meaning of the words: ‘...they will cry aloud (*yastirikhoon*)’ (*Fatir*: 37) is that they will scream and shout while calling for help. The word *yastirikhoon* is

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- (1) This verse is also by Al-Mutanabbi. It is from a poem which starts with the verse: ‘There is no pride except for the one who is not wronged. Intelligent or belligerent, he does not sleep.’ And it is in his *Diwan*, which is of the light metre, *Bahr Al-Khafeef*, and it consists of 42 verses.
- (2) Al-Mutanabbi has also used a similar verse in another poem of his *Diwan*, which is based on the abundant poetic metre *Bahr Al-Wafir*. This poem consists of 45 verses, and it precedes the meaning in this wording.

the plural verb derived from the noun *surakh* (cry). This is when a person shouts while asking someone else to save them from a predicament, crisis, or punishment. An example of this is what we hear when a fire breaks out, Allah, forbid these fires from harming our loved ones, and the people find themselves shouting while crying for help.

These disbelievers will cry aloud: ‘in that (hell-fire)’ (*Fatir*: 37). They will say, ‘O our Lord! Cause us to come out (of this suffering)! We shall (henceforth) do good deeds, not such as we were turned to do (before this time)!’ (*Fatir*: 37)

First, it is noticeable that they will use the words, ‘Our Lord’, while they are suffering in the hell-fire. They had rejected the concept of Allah’s Divinity and Lordship in their lives of this world. Indeed, they will acknowledge it in the hell-fire, but it will be too late. At that point, they will affirm, against themselves, that their worldly actions were not righteous. Their confessions will only be used as arguments against them, and their punishment will be continued without mitigation. If Allah *Glorified is He* were to respond to their request and return them to this worldly life again, would they act righteously according to their promises? Allah *Glorified is He* knows very well that they are lying, as He says, ‘And if they were sent back, they would return unto that which they are forbidden. Lo! They are liars.’ (*al-An’am*: 28)

Therefore, it is just something that they say because of the difficulty in which they are. If they were to be sent back to this world, they will only resume their regular disbelieving ways. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* will respond to them: ‘Did We not grant you a life that was long enough, so that whoever was willing to take thought could bethink himself?’ (*Fatir*: 37) Allah *Glorified is He* has prolonged their lives in this world, and they had enough time and an ample opportunity to reflect upon their choices.

‘...And (withal,) a warning messenger had been sent to you!’ (*Fatir*: 37) This is the messenger who admonished and warned them against the consequences of their actions. Despite that, they did not take the matter seriously and did not correct themselves in due time. ‘Taste, then, (the fruit of your evil deeds): for evildoers shall have none to succour them.’ (*Fatir*: 37) They will only taste the punishment, and they will have: ‘...no supporter (*naseer*) to succour them’ (*Fatir*: 37). A *naseer* (supporter) is the one who is prepared to go into battles

to defend you. In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...no protecting friend nor any helper’ (*ash-Shura*: 31). A *wali* (protecting friend) is a person who is close to you and defends you with hope, affection and compassion. The disbelievers in the hell-fire will have no protecting friend or helper in their situation. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ غَيْبِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٣٨﴾

**Allah knows all that is hidden in the heavens and earth;
He knows the thoughts contained in the heart [38]
(The Quran, *Fatir*: 38)**

This verse comes as an explanation of the verses that preceded it. Allah *Glorified is He* knows everything that is concealed in the heavens and the earth. He also knows the secrets of the hearts, as well as their hidden contents and intentions. He knew the intentions of the people of the fire, and He knew that if they were sent back to the life of this world, they would have resumed their evil ways. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* will leave them in that severe situation and will not send them back to this life, as this worldly life will not be repeated. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says,

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهُ، وَلَا يَزِيدُ الْكَافِرِينَ كُفْرُهُمْ إِلَّا مَقْتًا وَلَا يَزِيدُ الْكَافِرِينَ كُفْرُهُمْ إِلَّا خَسَارًا ﴿٣٩﴾

**It is He who made you [people] successors to the land. Those
who deny the truth will bear the consequences: their denial
will only make them more odious to their Lord, and add
only to their loss [39] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 39)**

The meaning of the word *khala'if* (inheriting successors) is that Allah *Glorified is He* created human beings as successive generations that inherit one another. Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: ‘I am about to place a successor in the earth’ (*al-Baqara*: 30) referring to Prophet Adam *peace be upon him*. That is why we said that Allah *Glorified is He* has granted us some of His attributes so that we can carry out our duties on this earth. Our power to act is from Allah’s Power. If we have wisdom in our behaviour, then it is from Allah’s Wisdom, and so forth. This is the meaning of the concept of *khilafah* (succession)

because a human being will find that everything which he can essentially do has been granted to him by his Creator. None of his power or nature is intrinsic.

We previously stated that, when you stand up from your seat, you are able to perform that action without knowing what took place in your organs and muscles, and how the commands were issued to these muscles to move. In reality, this is one of the attributes of the Creator and He has granted you a portion of it. The evidence is that He has already deprived other people of this ability, to make it clear to you that your power is not intrinsic in your body. Therefore, do not be deluded by it.

Scientists have imitated human movements to make robots and bulldozers. A single mechanical movement from the machine requires several commands and movements by their driver, who needs to press on a specific button for each movement. You do not have to do anything like this to move the various parts of your body. If you want to carry out a movement, you simply will it and your organs and limbs cooperate with you. They obey your commands without you having to contemplate the involved processes. If one of Allah's creatures can carry out such movements without commanding any limb or organ of their body, what do you perceive about the Creator's Absolute Might *Glorified is He*? Do you deny that He can say to anything 'Be!' and it exists, following his Will?

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'His command alone is such that when He wills a thing to be, He but says unto it, "Be!", and it is.' (*Ya Sin*: 82) When you want to move, you do not command any of your organs because you do not know which ones to command. In addition, you do not know what happens inside these interconnected organs, muscles and limbs to carry out this movement. That is why the Creator has arranged you in a way such that your limbs act merely according to your will. When Allah *Glorified is He* commands things with the word, 'Be', He knows the precise mechanisms and instruments that are going to move.

The Creator did not give you complete command over any of your limbs. He only subjected them to you and subjugated them to your will, but you cannot guarantee that they will obey your commands. In some diseases, the person orders his limbs to move and they disobey his orders. On the other hand, everything obeys the Creator's command.

Before summoning a human being into existence, Allah *Glorified is He* created their subsistence on earth before actually creating them. Additionally, Allah guaranteed that these essential forms of sustenance will be sufficient until the Day of Resurrection. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* left their intellects to work and discover what is necessary for life to be luxurious and comfortable.

Therefore, a vicegerent of Allah *Glorified is He* on earth has no choice but to receive Allah's Commandments with obedience and compliance. If they disbelieve after these blessings, they should know that: '...denial will fall back upon those who disbelieve' (*Fatir*: 39). Disbelief (*kufir*) means that a person did not obey Allah's Commandments. The Arabic word *kufir* means to cover something, so disbelieving in Allah *Glorified is He* is to cover and deny His Existence. That is why we previously said that disbelief is an indicator of the existence of faith because if faith in Allah *Glorified is He* never existed, there would not have been any disbelief.

In addition to disbelief in Allah *Glorified is He* there is also disbelief in the bounties and responsibilities that He has granted us. Some people disbelieve in Allah *Glorified is He* by forgetting Him the One Who provided these blessings for them. They may have also been idle and indolent by setting aside the exploration and extraction of these blessings from the depths of the earth. This leaves the blessings in places where people cannot benefit from them. Disbelief in these blessings also includes not fulfilling Allah's rights regarding them, and concealing such bounties from the deprived people who direly need them.

The famines and food crises that the world is suffering from today are natural consequences of disbelieving in Allah's blessings, either by being lazy and refraining from exploring them, or by extracting them from the earth while being miserly and stingy towards the poorer people. For instance, we lived for a long time in a narrow river valley without trying to explore the resources of the desert. Even when we started to farm the desert lands, we cultivated luxurious cash crops instead of cultivating the essential sources of our food. Now, we find our markets full of oranges, bananas, grapes, cantaloupes and strawberries, while we beg for a loaf of bread and beseech others for the actual necessities of our lives.

Therefore, the punishment here follows the poor nature of the work. ‘Denial will fall back upon those who disbelieve’ (*Fatir*: 39). The penalty of the disbelievers in Allah *Glorified is He* will be punishment in the Hereafter. The penalty of the disbelievers in Allah’s blessings will be hunger and humiliation at the hands of other people. If a man is humiliated by someone else, he will never fulfil a divine command or prohibition, and he will never be concerned with any religion or way. May Allah *Glorified is He* have mercy upon our grandparents who said, ‘The more you consume food that comes from your axe, the more you speak from your head’.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says, clarifying the end result of disbelief: ‘...for (persistent) denial of this truth only adds to the disbelievers’ loathsomeness in their Lord’s sight, and thus, their denial of this truth does but add to the disbelievers’ loss’ (*Fatir*: 39). Yes, disbelief will increase Allah’s contempt for the disbelievers because they denied their Lord, Creator, Provider, and the One Who granted their blessings. Any disbelief in one of these attributes will lead to hatred and contempt from Allah *Glorified is He* and this contempt will increase as the person persists in their disbelief. Then, that person will be at a ‘loss’ (*Fatir*: 39), and what loss is more than disbelieving in Allah *Glorified is He*? The loss here is massive because it involves the destruction and loss of all good in the life of this world and the Hereafter. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says,

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ شُرَكَاءَكُمُ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ
الْأَرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ أَمْ آتَيْنَهُم كِتَابًا فَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْهُ
بَلْ إِن يَعِدُ الظَّالِمُونَ بَعْضُهُم بَعْضًا إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴿٤٠﴾

Say, ‘Consider those “partners” of yours that you call upon beside Allah. Show me! What part of the earth did they create? What share of the heavens do they possess?’ Have We given them a book that contains clear evidence? No indeed! The idolaters promise each other only delusion [40] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 40)

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was told to ask the disbelievers: ‘Have you seen (and considered) those beings and forces to whom you ascribe a share in Allah’s divinity, (and) whom you invoke beside

Allah?’ (*Fatir*: 40) This question is intended to order the disbelievers, ‘Tell me about these partners you worship besides Allah’. It is not intended as a simple question asking whether they have seen their false deities. Instead, the verse is demanding any credible information that these disbelievers had, which forced them to worship the false deities that they were accustomed to worship besides Allah *Glorified is He*. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted them to judge their dimness in this matter.

The words ‘Show me what it is that they have created on Earth’ (*Fatir*: 40) mean, ‘Tell me about anything they have created on this earth’. ‘...or do (you claim that) they have a share in (governing) the heavens?’ (*Fatir*: 40) means, ‘Did they assist Allah in creating the heavens?’ and ‘Have We ever revealed them a divine book on which they could rely as evidence (in support of their views)?’ (*Fatir*: 40), means, ‘Is there a book that permits idolatry for you, as polytheists, and is an argument that supports your polytheism?’

Allah *Glorified is He* explained this matter to us in another verse in the Quran, where 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) Allah *Glorified is He* does not only negate their partaking with Him in the creation, but He negates their mere witnessing of their creation. They have no knowledge of creation, nor do they have any connection to it. They are not able to describe how the skies and the earth were created, nor how they, themselves, were made.

Then He says, ‘Nay’ (*Fatir*: 40), which is a word that negates what was said before it and confirms the judgement that is made after it. ‘(the hope which) the evildoers hold out to one another (is) nothing but a delusion’ (*Fatir*: 40); what the evildoers hope of one another is nothing but a delusion. A deluder is an impostor who fashions falsehood in the form of truth, in order to attract people to it, and he embellishes it in order to delude them with it.

In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* also says in another verse: ‘O man! What is it that lures you away from your Bountiful (*kareem*) Lord?’ (*al-Infitar*: 6) This verse means: ‘What has deluded you into disobeying Him? What encouraged you to go against His commands?’ It is as if Allah *Glorified is He*

is teaching us the answer in the same words of the question. He used the word *kareem* (bountiful) because it is His Bounty and Generosity that has lured us away from Him.

The meaning of the word ‘Nay’ establishes that all these disbelievers’ concepts that were mentioned are false. Their false deities and idols have not participated in the creation of anything. In addition, no divine revelation has come to these polytheists to act as a proof in their favour. Their disbelief is the result of their own deceptive ornamentation, and the reality is that they are deluding and deceiving one another with these false concepts. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُمْسِكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ أَنْ تَزُولَا وَلَئِنْ زَالَتَا
أَمْسَكَهُمَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّنْ بَعْدِهِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا ﴿٤١﴾

Allah keeps the heavens and earth from vanishing; if they did vanish, no one else could stop them. Allah is most forbearing, most forgiving [41] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 41)

Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* alone is the One Who keeps the skies from collapsing. He keeps the heavens and the earth from ceasing to be. If the Creator were to leave them, no one else would be able to hold them from wreaking disorder. The words: ‘...after He (Allah *Glorified is He*) will have ceased to do so’ (*Fatir*: 41) confirmed that this matter belongs to Allah *Glorified is He* alone. He has no partner or adversary in this universe. This concept arises from the essence of the verse: ‘Say, “He Allah, the One.”’ (*al-Ikhlās*: 1)

This is because Allah *Glorified is He* created the skies and the earth without any visible pillars or supports to carry them. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘(He) created the skies without any supports that you could see’ (*Luqman*: 10). There is no one besides Allah *Glorified is He* who raised this blue dome in this way without pillars. Indeed, the utmost progress that humans have achieved in construction was the building of bridges that are several metres long without any pillars in the middle. To do that, they use supports that are stronger at the ends, and this is called a suspension bridge. The construction of these bridges is not even close to the magnificence of the sky. The sky, as we have previously

said, is everything that is above you. Allah *Glorified is He* is holding the sky and everything that is in it, such as the stars, moons, celestial bodies, and constellations. He also keeps the earth from shaking with its inhabitants and troubling them.

Scientists tell us that gravity holds these bodies together, but if there is a gravitational force that pulls us towards the earth, divine power has still maintained other objects in their orbits away from colliding and destroying the earth during our lives. The system of the universe is perfect. Everything in the skies and the earth has what it needs to preserve its equilibrium and prevent it from escaping its path.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...for if they should ever deviate, none could uphold them after He will have ceased to do so' (*Fatir*: 41). These words carry the meaning of negation, as in Allah's saying: '...none are their mothers except those who gave them birth' (*al-Mujadala*: 2). The verse is concluded with Allah's saying: '(But) verily, He is Ever-Forbearing, Much-Forgiving.' (*Fatir*: 41) What is the relationship between these attributes of Allah *Glorified is He* (Ever-Forbearing and Much-Forgiving) and the cosmic issue of upholding the heavens and the earth? Scholars said that Allah mentions these attributes in this verse because a lot of debate has surrounded the issue of cosmic creation. Many people transgressed in their arguments against Allah's Divine Power. They ignorantly refuted that the skies and the earth are upheld by supports because they did not notice any pillars when they walked the earth or flew airplanes in the atmosphere.

It suffices that the Creator *Glorified is He* informed us of it by saying: 'He has created the skies without any supports that you could see' (*Luqman*: 10). This means that they do not really have pillars or do have pillars which we cannot see. Both understandings are valid and we must not refute them without knowledge.

Allah *Glorified is He* is Ever Forbearing and does not punish those who show audacity towards Him or those who occupy themselves with what is His right. Indeed, He does not even hasten to punish those who deny His Existence. Without this forbearance, He would have collapsed His creation upon our heads.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in a Qudsi Hadith: ‘The earth said, “O Lord! Allow me to swallow up the children of Adam, for they enjoy the good that You have given them, but they do not thank You.” The sky said, “O Lord! Allow me to send down darkness upon the children of Adam, for they enjoy the good that You have given them, but they do not thank You.” The mountains said, “O Lord! Allow us to fall upon the children of Adam, for they enjoy the good that you have given them, but they do not thank You.” The seas said, “O Lord! Allow us to drown the children of Adam, for they enjoy the good that You have given them, but they do not thank You.”’ Allah, responds: ‘Leave Me and My creation. If you had created them, you would have had mercy upon them. If they repent, then I am their beloved, and if they do not repent, then I am their source of cure.’⁽¹⁾ Therefore, if it was not for Allah’s Forbearance towards us and His Forgiveness for our sins, He would not uphold the skies and the earth, and this universe would collapse upon itself. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ جَاءَهُمْ نَذِيرٌ لَّيَكُونُنَّ أَهْدَى
مِّنْ أَحَدَى الْأُمَمِ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ نَذِيرٌ مَّا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا نُفُورًا ﴿٤٢﴾

[The idolaters] swore their most solemn oath that, if someone came to warn them, they would be more rightly guided than any [other] community, but when someone did come they turned yet further away [42] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 42)

Allah *Glorified is He* says that they swore: ‘...their most solemn oaths’ (*Fatir*: 42). They strived in their oaths to the greatest extent possible, ‘that if a warning messenger should ever come to them, they would follow his guidance better’ and they would be better in action, ‘...than any of the (older)

(1) Included by Al-Ghazali in his *Ihya` ‘Ulum Ad-Din* (4/52) from the Hadith of some of the first three generations of Muslims, the wording is: ‘There is not a slave that disobeys (Allah) except that the space he occupies on the earth asks permission to swallow him up, and what is above him in the sky asks permission to send darkness upon him. Allah said to the sky and the earth: ‘Leave my slave alone and give him respite, for indeed you two did not create him. Had you created him, you would show him mercy. He may turn to Me in repentance, and if so I will forgive him, and he may change and act righteously, and if so I will turn his bad deeds into good ones.’

communities' (*Fatir*: 42). Therefore, they claimed that they would have been better than the previous nations.

Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies this meaning in another verse, as He says, 'And, indeed, they (who deny the truth) have always said, "If only we had a Scripture (to this effect) from our forefathers, we would certainly be true servants of Allah."' (*as-Saffat*: 167-169) They said these words with their mouths, and Allah knew that they were lying. However, He loosened the reins for them and did not disclose their lies. Indeed, they should not have worried or concerned themselves about those nations of ancient times because the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was the reminder sent to guide their own nation.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...but now that a warning messenger (Prophet Muhammad) has been sent to them, (his call) but increased their aversion' (*Fatir*: 42). They avoided the truth and distanced themselves from its guidance, because the message came through Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. They claimed that if it had come through the way of a leading tribesman, they would have certainly accepted it. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And they say, "Why was not this Quran bestowed on some great man of the two cities?"' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

Allah *Glorified is He* responds to them by saying: '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) It is amazing that they want Allah's Mercy to be distributed according to their desires and the choice of Allah's Messenger to be made as they wish. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Allah knows best upon whom to bestow His Message' (*al-An'am*: 124).

Allah *Glorified is He* distributed amongst them the simplest affairs of their life in this world. He made some people rich, some people poor, some people strong, and some people weak. The disbeliever's words are evidence that they have no objections regarding the Quran itself. They did not deny it because it was a form of magic, sorcery, or poetry as they had previously claimed. They only rejected it because it was revealed to none other than Prophet

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* explains the reasons behind their aversion:

أَسْتَكْبَارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَكْرَ السَّيِّئِ وَلَا يَحِيقُ الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ إِلَّا بِأَهْلِهِ فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ
إِلَّا سُنَّتَ الْأَوَّلِينَ فَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا وَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٤٣﴾

Became more arrogant in the land, and intensified their plotting of evil – the plotting of evil only rebounds on those who plot. Do they expect anything but what happened to earlier people? You will never find any change in Allah’s practice; you will never find any deviation there [43]
(The Quran, *Fatir*: 43)

They were arrogant towards the truth and did not accept it because this truth affected their positions of power and leadership. It only allowed them a position of servitude and equality with all the other beings in creation. They were used to authority and control, so it was difficult for them to be equal to their slaves. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* was responding to them, ‘O you who are too arrogant to accept the truth because of the authority you have! Does it not befit you to swallow your pride and ask yourselves where your leadership came from?’

By Allah, if Allah had enabled Abraha to destroy the *Ka’ba* during the event of the elephant, the people of the peninsula would have flocked to another *Ka’ba* in the Yemeni city of Sana’a. If that had happened, would the Quraysh polytheists have had any leadership? Would they have any dignity or mention amongst the people? They used to forbid people from walking around the *Ka’ba* unless they were naked, so that the pilgrims would buy clothes from them! Therefore, they should have used their intellects and thought about the source of their dignity. Where did their provisions come from?

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Are you not aware 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 creatures, which smote them with stone-hard blows of chastisement pre-ordained, and caused them to become like a field of grain that has been eaten down to its roots.’ (*al-Fil*: 1-5)

Why did Allah *Glorified is He* do this to the Army of the Elephant? Allah *Glorified is He* gives the answer in the chapter of Quraysh which comes immediately after the chapter of *al-Fil*: 'So that Quraysh might remain habitually secure, in their winter and summer journeys. Let them, therefore, worship the Lord of this House, who has given them food against hunger, and made them safe from danger.' (*Quraysh*: 1-4)

Allah *Glorified is He* punished the Army of the Elephant for the sake of Quraysh. This was to prolong their positions of leadership and augment their nourishment and security. Despite all of this, they arrogantly rejected Allah's way and then stubbornly resisted His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* while plotting against him.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, '(It was due to) their arrogant behaviour on earth, and their devising of evil (arguments against Allah's messages)' (*Fatir*: 43). They devised their evil plots against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers with him, in order to make them stop their call to Islam. If they had known the cause of their arrogance, this arrogance would have guided them to believe in the One Who made them powerful.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* affirms this reality in the words: '...Yet (in the end,) such evil scheming will engulf none but its authors' (*Fatir*: 43), for they schemed and plotted against Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and conspired against him, and they wronged the believers and tortured them. However, Allah *Glorified is He* made their plans futile, as He mentioned in another verse: 'And (remember, O Prophet,) how those who were bent on denying the truth were scheming against you.' (*al-Anfal*: 30) They wanted to imprison Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says, regarding their schemes to stop Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Or to slay you, or to drive you away: thus, have they (always) schemed: but Allah brought their scheming to nothing – for Allah is above all schemers.' (*al-Anfal*: 30)

They had resorted to all kinds of tactics and tricks to put an end to the call of Islam, but they were unsuccessful. Even when they made plans to kill Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Allah *Glorified is He* thwarted

their efforts and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* escaped while they were sleeping, as he scattered dust on their heads. Then, when they despaired of putting an end to him with different tactics, they turned to the jinn. They asked them to bewitch Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* but Allah *Glorified is He* saved him from them, and they still tried to place poison into his food.

It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* was saying to them, ‘Save your efforts. You will not put out Allah’s Light, and you will not prevent Muhammad from His call. You will not be able to do that with all your mockery, derisions, harm, conspiracies, plots or magic’. ‘Yet (in the end,) such evil scheming will engulf none but its authors’ (*Fatir*: 43), which means that their schemes will descend upon them and encompass them.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Can they expect anything but the traditional outcome (and punishment) of those (sinners) of older times?’ (*Fatir*: 43) This means that they should not expect any other outcome than the same *Sunna* (outcome or tradition) of those older nations regarding the previous messengers. A *Sunna* is a way or custom that is traditionally followed. So, did they find that Allah *Glorified is He* had abandoned any of the previous messengers he had sent to the previous nations, or found any enemies and deniers whom Allah did not destroy when they harmed His messengers? Supporting the messengers is a followed divine practice, as Allah say, ‘...and that, verily, Our hosts – they indeed – would (in the end) be victorious’ (*as-Saffat*: 173).

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* emphasizes this meaning by saying: ‘Thus (it is): no change will you ever find in Allah’s way.’ (*Fatir*: 43) Why does Allah’s way never change or alter? Allah *Glorified is He* does not have a *bida`*, and the meaning of a *bida`* is any primary draft that may be subject to alteration or improvement. Allah *Glorified is He* does not have a *bida`* because there is no way that is better than Allah’s way. Secondly, it is because Allah *Glorified is He* is the Only True Deity. There are no partners to His Divinity, and there is no one to change what He does.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَكَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَمَا
 كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعْجِزَهُ مِن شَيْءٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَلِيمًا قَدِيرًا ﴿٤٤﴾

**Have they not travelled in the land and seen how those
 before them met their end, although they were superior to
 them in strength? Allah is not to be frustrated by anything
 in the heavens or on the earth: He is all knowing,
 all powerful [44] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 44)**

The question in: ‘Have they never walked through the land and beheld’ (*Fatir*: 44) is a question expressing astonishment ‘Have they never walked through the land and beheld what happened to those (deniers of the truth) who lived before their time’ (*Fatir*: 44)? This is a reference to the disbelievers who were punished by Allah *Glorified is He* ‘and were greater in power than they are?’ (*Fatir*: 44) These previous nations had more power than Quraysh’s polytheists.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: ‘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 reasoning?’ (*as-Saffat*: 137-138) In their travels and movements, they did pass by the towns of `Ad and Thamud, as well as the people of Lut (Lot) and Saleh (Shelah). Although these previous nations had civilizations, as well as great monuments and palaces that were unmatched, the polytheists saw their ruins and the destruction and annihilation that befell them after denying their messengers.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in another chapter: ‘Are you not aware of how your Lord has dealt with (the tribe of) `Ad, (the people of) Iram who had many pillars, the like of whom has never been reared in all the land? And with (the tribe of) Thamud, who hollowed out rocks in the valley? And with Pharaoh of the (many) monuments? (It was they) who transgressed all bounds of equity all over their lands, and brought about great corruption therein: and therefore, your Lord let loose upon them a scourge of suffering: for, verily, your Lord is ever observation!’ (*al-Fajr*: 6-14) It is startling that the people who had these civilizations, and whom everyone had heard of, were unable to do anything to protect themselves from falling into oblivion.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Have they never walked through the land...' (*Fatir*: 44). We used to think that walking in the earth meant travelling upon its land because we travel on the earth and not in it. However, the chief form of sustenance upon the earth is its atmosphere of air. You can survive without water for several days, and you can survive longer without food, but you cannot survive without air except for a short time.

This atmosphere of air is part of the earth, and that is why it turns around with the globe and is attached to it. According to this meaning, we do not travel upon the earth, but rather, travel in it. Even a plane that flies in the upper strata of the atmosphere is travelling in the earth because this air is part of the earth itself and a main source of its sustenance needed for breathing and nourishment.

To convince you that this air is a chief force of the earth's sustenance, try this experiment. Take a flowerpot or a barrel and put in it some agricultural soil of a specific weight. Then, plant in it a fruit-bearing tree, like bananas for example. After some time, weigh the fruits that you have taken from the tree and weigh what has been subtracted from the soil. You will find that a significant portion of the weight of the fruit came from the atmosphere, as its carbon was formed from the carbon dioxide molecules in the air.

Air is the essential nutrient for plants, and that is why we say that it is the source of their nourishment, we used to believe that the soil was the main source needed for their nourishment. That is why the Quran pointed out this matter saying: 'And if they would but truly observe the Torah and the Gospel and all (the revelation) that has been bestowed upon them from their Lord, they would indeed be nourished from above them and from below them.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 66) Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the nourishment coming from above them before mentioning the nourishment coming from below them.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in this verse: 'Have they never walked through the land and beheld what happened to those (deniers of the truth)...' (*Fatir*: 44)? Allah *Glorified is He* wants the disbelievers to look at the realities of their lives. He wants them to avoid looking at the believers' speech, but rather, observe the reality of their own lives. He says, 'Have they never walked...' (*Fatir*: 44) because they did indeed, travel in the earth. These people traded in the North of the Arabian Peninsula in the summer and in the South of the peninsula in the winter. So,

in this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* was not commanding them to start travelling, but rather, He wanted them to remember the reality of their past journeys.

On these journeys, they saw many of the traces of those disbelieving nations who preceded them. Indeed, they did not see amongst the previous nations a messenger who had been defeated by those who denied him. Allah *Glorified is He* defeated the deniers and disbelievers and decreed victory for the true believers. Those nations who were punished have had greater powers than the polytheists had. However, this created power was not a match to counteract the Power of Allah *Glorified is He*. So, do not look at the Messenger's power, but look at the Power of the One Who sent him. Allah *Glorified is He* also took it upon Himself to protect and support His Messenger.

Therefore, this futile opposition was directed from the creation to their Creator. Did they really think that they would be able to incapacitate Allah? That is why Allah *Glorified is He* negated two concepts. The first concept He annulled was their ability to incapacitate or overcome their Creator. He also negated their ability to merely confront or compete with their Lord.

Allah *Glorified is He* was dictating to them and inspiring them, while giving them victory in some excursions, so that they could enjoy the full extents of their powers and exhaust all their forces. Therefore, this showed them that their strength and any help they were able to seek from other people would not be able to incapacitate Allah *Glorified is He* because Allah is not incapacitated by anything. He does not have a partner or rival that could assist them against Allah, as Allah is the One Who helps the believers and gives them victory. Allah *Glorified is He* destroyed the stronger disbelievers before them, and indeed, was able to destroy their powers.

When Allah *Glorified is He* wants to emphasize some Quranic matters, He often informs us of an event that outlined the concept by using words such as: 'You travelled in the earth, and you saw such and such'. However, in this verse, He did not state the concept, but rather placed it as a question that asked: 'Did they not travel in the earth'? The certain and undeniable answer to this divine question was that they, indeed, travelled. This emphasised the statement because it had a greater effect on the listener, just as negative questioning has a greater effect on the listener as affirmative questioning.

The topic of travelling in the earth takes up a large portion of the Noble Quran, because Allah *Glorified is He* wants people to look at the signs that exist in the universe. That is why He commanded us in one verse by saying: ‘Say, “Walk in the Earth and behold’ (*an-Naml*: 69). Allah *Glorified is He* also says in another verse: ‘Say, “Walk in the Earth, and then behold’ (*al-An‘am*: 11). What is the difference between the two expressions? Travelling in the Earth either is done for studying it and contemplating its signs, or is done for gaining particular benefits.

In the first expression, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...and behold’ (*an-Naml*: 69). This is a reference to a journey done mainly to consider and reflect upon the signs of Allah *Glorified is He* and His amazing architecture of the universe.

In the second expression, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘and then behold’ (*al-An‘am*: 11). This expression referred to journeys that are conducted for the purpose of work, taking benefits and seeking provisions. Even if you visit the different lands of the earth seeking provision and benefit, do not forget to reflect and contemplate the signs of Allah’s vast dominion, especially if you are in an environment different from your traditional environment.

If you travel in a rural, desert environment, such as the Hijaz area, for example, you will almost never see a trace of the colour green. On the other hand, in Indonesia, we went to places that were clothed in green. There was not a spot on the ground that did not have vegetation. There are treasures in both environments that distinguish them from each other, and that is why they say by way of parable, ‘The more you live the more you see, and if you walk you see more’.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And (do they not see that the will of) Allah can never be foiled by anything in the heavens or on earth, since, verily, He is All Knowing, Infinite in His power?’ (*Fatir*: 44) We already spoke about the concept of incapacitation. This verse is not just stating that nothing in the heavens or the earth will ever incapacitate Allah *Glorified is He* but furthermore, that such a concept can never even be imagined.

In the words, ‘...anything’, the word ‘any’ indicated generality. For instance, when you say, ‘I do not have money’, you could have a small inconsiderable

amount of money. But if you said, 'I do not have anything called money', then you have negated the presence of the most inconsiderable amounts of money.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...He is All Knowing, Infinite in His Power' (*Fatir*: 44). This clarified why Allah *Glorified is He* cannot be incapacitated by anything, for Allah *Glorified is He* is the All Knowing Who has the Encompassing Knowledge from which nothing can escape. If the disbelievers want to plot anything, Allah *Glorified is He* knows it and He knows its place. He is Infinite in His power and Knowledge of all things, and knowledge and power are the two elements of victory. If you truly know something, you will be able to repel it.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بِمَا كَسَبُوا مَا تَرَكُوا عَلَى ظُهُرِهِمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّىٰ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ بَصِيرًا ﴿٤٥﴾

If Allah were to punish people [at once] for the wrong they have done, there would not be a single creature left on the surface of the earth. He gives them respite for a stated time and, whenever their time comes, Allah has been watching His servants [45] (The Quran, *Fatir*: 45)

Allah *Glorified is He* is full of Mercy and is constantly dispensing His Blessings to His servants. He grants these blessings even to those who do not believe in Him and those who disobey His commands. If Allah *Glorified is He* were to punish them for their grave acts of transgression, He would not leave a single one of them on this earth. So, why does Allah *Glorified is He* deal with us in this way and grant us this relief? This is because Allah *Glorified is He* is our Lord and Creator. He knows that men are weak in the face of their desires and demons. That is why His Forbearance takes precedence over His Anger, and His Pardon takes precedence over His punishment. Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...although He pardons many of them' (*ash-Shura*: 30).

There is a Hadith narrated that Allah *Glorified is He* addressed us with the following words: 'If you did not sin, I would create another creation besides you that would sin, and they would seek my forgiveness and I would forgive

them.’⁽¹⁾ Or else, how could Allah *Glorified is He* be described as the All-Forgiving. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to affirm that He possesses all the Attributes of Perfection. The first of these attributes is the attribute of Necessary Existence. The second attribute is Life. All the other attributes are subsequent to these two.

These attributes of Allah *Glorified is He* can be divided into two categories. The first category consists of the Divine attributes that have an opposite, and they are the attributes of action done by Allah *Glorified is He*. These include the bringing of beings into life, which is the opposite of causing beings to die, and the Exalter, which is the opposite of the Humiliator.

On the other hand, the attributes that do not have an opposite are Allah’s Essential attributes, such as that He is The Ever-Living, the Almighty, the All-Dominant, and the Ever-Forbearing. All these attributes have no opposing actions.

Allah *Glorified is He* did not punish people for the transgressions and oppressions that they have earned because Allah *Glorified is He* created man, and He created his desires and natural impulses. All the religious commandments came to overcome these desires and rise above these natural impulses, not to wipe them out. They came to refine them, and not to terminate them. Otherwise, had Allah *Glorified is He* willed for these transgressions and oppression not to occur, He would not have made these natural impulses in the first place.

For example, Allah *Glorified is He* created the natural impulse of sexual attraction so that the world would be populated. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted mankind to rise above this natural impulse, by making it lawful and within the bounds of legislation. We have already clarified the difference between lawful and unlawful sexual relationships. When these relations are born in the public light and within the bounds of Allah’s legislation, we rejoice in its ceremonies, announce it, and are proud of it. However, when it is done in secrecy, far from what Allah *Glorified is He* has legislated, we try to hide it and rid ourselves of its yield. If it is then disclosed to the people, it is a stark disgrace that will never be rubbed out.

(1) Narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (2/309) and also by Muslim in his *Sahih* (3749) in the *Book of Repentance*, Its wording is: ‘By the One in whose hand is my soul, if you did not sin, Allah will remove you and bring about a people who did sin. They would seek Allah’s forgiveness and He would forgive them.’

A Hadith narrated that a Companion of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was known to be overly protective over his daughters. When a man proposed to marry one of the Companion's daughters, the father informed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* smiled and said to him, 'The lawful bond cuts off the nose of jealousy.'⁽¹⁾ This means that the same concept which the Companion had once refused to accept became a matter of rejoicing, and he even called the people to witness his daughter's marital agreement. This is because it has been brought about lawfully in a way that Allah has permitted. The word of truth during the marriage agreement made these hidden sensual feelings manifests, and transformed a concealed sensational action into a lawful permissible event of happiness.

The natural impulse of sexual gratification in animals was made for a divine wisdom. A young child, for example, needs a parent to raise him and provide for him. He remains dependant on his father for a difficult period of fifteen years. If Allah *Glorified is He* had not based procreation on the sexual act, and placed within it such pleasures, many people would abstain from having children. Likewise, the mother bears great difficulty in pregnancy, childbirth; breastfeeding and so forth to the extent that she may even vow to avoid having another child. However, after the pain of delivery ceases and the child grows up, she longs to have another one, and this is how life continues.

Likewise, the natural impulse to be curious and love exploration exists in man so that he can reflect upon the universe around him and look for Allah's secrets therein. Allah *Glorified is He* did not make it so that people could act stealthily towards one another and track each other's disgraces and honours. Likewise, eating and drinking are natural impulses that Allah *Glorified is He* has made because they constitute the essential sources of life. They should

(1) Abu Hilal Al-'Askari mentioned in *As-Sana'atayn* in the chapter on analogy and metaphor, that He saw 'Ali with Fatima in a room, so he closed the door for them, and said: 'The lawful cuts off the nose of jealousy.' Al-Maidani said, in *Majma' Al-Amthal*, that this took place on the wedding night of 'Ali and Fatima, and he said that this Hadith was related from Al-Hajaj ibn Minhal, who classed it as 'marfu'. You can also look at Abu Mansur At-Th'alabi in *Al-'Ijaz Wa Al-'Ijaz*, in the chapter on his analogy, and Ibn Hamdun in *At-Tadhkira Al-Hamduniyyah*, on what comes in gentleness and firmness.

only be consumed within these limits that preserve life, so that they do not turn into gluttony, greed or fullness and indigestion.

When you consider the matter of natural impulses, you will find that the Creator has instilled natural impulses in man, along with their opposite impulses. So, you may see a man being merciful during some events and bad-tempered in other instances. He might appear mighty in one instance and show humility and modesty in other occasions. These two natural impulses are naturally not found at the same instance. Belief dictates that a believer must act mightily and strongly in some cases, while acting with humility during other times.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...Allah will in time bring forth (instead of you) people whom He loves and who love Him – humble towards the believers, proud towards all who deny the truth.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 54) He also says, ‘Muhammad is Allah’s Apostle; and those who are (truly) with him are firm and unyielding towards all deniers of the truth, (yet) full of mercy towards one another.’ (*al-Fath*: 29) Therefore, the Creator has placed opposing natural impulses in you and He has not repressed any of them, so you can use each natural impulse at its appropriate time.

The meaning of the words: ‘If Allah were to hold men (at once) to account’ (*Fatir*: 45) refers to punishing them ‘...for whatever (wrong) they earn (*kasabu*) (on Earth)’ (*Fatir*: 45). The word *kasabu* used here is the plural verb of the word *kasaba*. It indicates the earning or acquisition of a natural profit that is additional to the capital investment. On the other hand, the word *iktasaba* follows the lexical pattern of the word *ifta’ala* which indicates an earning that is fabricated or that resulted from unnatural or unlawful actions.

For that reason, the Quran generally used the word *kasaba* for acts of goodness and used the word *iktasaba* for acts of evil. For instance, Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: ‘...in its favour shall be whatever good it does (*kasabat*), and against it whatever evil it does (*iktasabat*)’ (*al-Baqara*: 286). This is because righteousness comes naturally without any fabrication, while acts of evil require stealthy efforts and cautious plots. Therefore, we say that the burden of obedience on man is insignificant compared to the burden of disobedience.

However, Allah *Glorified is He* says regarding evil deeds: 'Indeed, those who earn (*kasaba*) evil and by their sinfulness are engulfed are destined for the Fire' (*al-Baqara*: 81). The Quran used the word *kasaba* in this verse regarding evil deeds because it is talking about those who have sinned excessively, to the extent that they have come to love and adore disobedience. They talk about their sins and declare them openly as if disobedience comes naturally for them. In their transgression, they have started to disobey Allah *Glorified is He* without any dissimulation or caution. So, their earnings are a *kasb* and not an *iktisab*, as they rejoice with their sins as if they were lawful gains, and do not censure, blame themselves or feel regret for their disobedience.

The verse we are discussing here has the same meaning. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'If Allah were to hold men (at once) to account for whatever (wrong) they earn (*kasaba*) (on earth), He would not leave a single living creature upon its back' (*Fatir*: 45). This means that these people adore their disobedience and transgressions, while rejoicing in the process as if it was a profit.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* gave the outcome of this conditional sentence: 'If Allah were to hold men (at once) to account, He would not leave a single living (stepping) creature (*daabba*) on its back' (*Fatir*: 45). The meaning of the word *daabba* includes everything that steps on the earth or crawls on its surface gently, but it is mostly used for that which is ridden or carries a load. That is why an Arab once said to another Arab, 'You had tired me when you were a young man (*shabban*) (walking swiftly) and still exhaust me as an old man (*dabba*) (stepping gently)'.

What sin have these creatures committed to bear the consequence of man's oppression? The scholars said that the connection here is that the creature is created and subjugated to the service of man and his comfort. So, the creatures may get destroyed so that man's comfort is withheld. The rain is withheld and the earth becomes dry. Thus, at that point, man will not find any nourishment, either from the flesh of animals or from the vegetation of the earth. This will be a humiliation for mankind, as they see their means of livelihood and causes of comfort being taken from them, while they can do nothing.

If you cross-reference the verses of the Quran, you will find that two verses talk about this meaning. The first verse is in the chapter of *an-Nahl*, in

which Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘If Allah were to hold men (at once) to account for all the evil transgression that they do (on earth), He would not leave a single living creature upon it. However, He grants them respite until a term set (by Him): but when the end of their term approaches, they can neither delay it by a single moment, nor can they hasten it.’ (*an-Nahl*: 61)

The second verse is here in the chapter of *Fatir*: ‘If Allah were to hold men (at once) to account for the (wrong) they earn (on earth), He would not leave a single living creature upon its back. However, He grants them respite for a term set (by Him): but when their term comes to an end – then, verily, (they will come to know that) Allah sees all that is in (the hearts of) His servants.’ (*Fatir*: 45)

Some people may see repetition in these two verses, but Allah *Glorified is He* forbade that there be any futile repetition in His speech. If you reflected upon the verses, you would find a distinct meaning in each of these verses. The first verse talked about the transgressions of people, while the second verse talked about the evil deeds that they earned. Each of the two expressions gives you a different meaning because a person may act with transgression, but then may feel remorse for their sins, and not rejoice at it or persist in it. However, if it becomes a habit for the person and he starts to adore it, then it is *iktisab* and unnatural as we have already mentioned.

The first verse says, ‘...He would not leave a single living creature upon its back,’ (*Fatir*: 45) while the second verse says, ‘...He would not leave a single living creature upon it’ (*an-Nahl*: 61). We find that, in the first verse, Allah *Glorified is He* talked about time and the set term that will not be hastened and will not be delayed. In the second verse, He talked about the reward awaiting His servants’ actions, and that Allah sees all the actions of His servants. Nothing from them is hidden from him. Therefore, the two verses are complementary and there is no repetition in them at all.

In the words: ‘...He would not leave a single living creature upon its back’ (*Fatir*: 45) and the words: ‘...He would not leave a single living creature upon it’ (*an-Nahl*: 61), the pronoun ‘it’ is attached to the verse preceding it, in which Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...And (do they not see that the will of) Allah can never be foiled by anything in the heavens or on earth’ (*Fatir*: 44)? The

pronoun referred to the closest noun mentioned, which is the earth. This reference is also understood by looking at the context logically because the meaning applies to it.

This verse also has a story⁽¹⁾. When we were children in the Quranic school of Sheikh Hasan *Allah rest his soul* the Sheikh used to normally assign a prefect from the students to correct the tablets for us. There was a day in which Sheikh Hasan sat and corrected our tablets by himself. However, on this day, I had not corrected my tablet at all, and I was waiting to be punished. The Sheikh said to me, 'Listen to me, as I will teach you how to read this verse without confusing it with the verse in the chapter of *an-Nahl*. Do not gather between the two *dha* words or between the two *seen* phrases. If you say *bi zhulmihim* (for all the evil transgression), do not then say *'ala zhahriha* (upon its back) (as both phrases contain the *dha* sounds) and if you say *bima kasabu* (the (wrong) they earn), do not then say *la yasta`khiruna sa`ah* (can neither delay it by a single moment) (because both phrases had the *seen* sound).'

This is how our Sheikh taught us to live with the Quran and to interact with it, and Allah *Glorified is He* the Most Great, speaks the truth saying: 'Hence, indeed, We made this Quran easy to bear in mind: who, then, is willing to take it to heart?' (*al-Qamar*: 22)

I also have another story about him that I still remember, concerning the chapter *ash-Shura*. The Sheikh sat and was correcting the tablets for us while we had run away and not done any correction. When I sat in front of the Sheikh, I had to recite the verse, '*Ain. Seen. Qaf.*' (*ash-Shura*: 2), but incorrectly pronounced them as one single word, '*asq*'! The Sheikh punished me, until he realized that I had not corrected my tablet. So, he said, 'Say these letters as '*ain. seen. qaf.*' This story has stayed with me until now. Allah have mercy and be pleased with all of these scholars.

The meaning of the word *ajal* (term) in the words: '...but when their term (*ajal*) comes to an end' (*Fatir*: 45) refers to the time of their final resurrection and reckoning on the Day of Judgment, or to a time when they will be destroyed by an annihilating punishment.

(1) The story of Ash-Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawi with the teaching school of Sheikh Hasan *Allah rest their souls*

We know that annihilating punishments such as a screaming storm, earthquake or being swallowed up by the earth, are only sent down when the guidance of a people is despaired of. This is when all hope has been lost of them being guided, as we have seen in the story of Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*: ‘O my Lord! Leave not on Earth any of those who deny the truth. And then, on Resurrection Day, He will cover them (all) with humiliation, and will say, “Where, now, are those beings to whom you ascribed a share in My Divinity, (and) for whose sake you cut yourselves off (from My guidance)?” (Whereupon) those who (in their lifetime) were endowed with knowledge will say, “Verily, disgrace and misery (have fallen) this day upon those who have been denying the truth.”’ (*Nuh*: 26-27) However, if there is still hope that some of the people will believe in Allah’s call, punishments like these do not descend upon them.

The word *ajal* (term) here could be referring to the period assigned to a particular nation, as Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘For every nation of people, a term has been set’ (*Yunus*: 49). Thus, we can deduce that there are three types of terms. These are: the term of the life of this world and its end, the term of each individual that ends with his own life and the term of an entire nation if an annihilating punishment removes them completely.

Ajal here may also indicate that every nation has a time at which it is made victorious and triumphant despite the presence of stubborn deniers and disbelievers, as what happened to Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when the Muslims were made victorious at the Battle of Badr. The nation of disbelief and oppression had a term that was ended with Islam and the power of the Muslims, though the hope, for the Muslims, had been, then, only a glimmer of light to the extent that despair had overcome hope.

Even ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said when: ‘Their forces will be routed and they will turn tail and flee.’ (*al-Qamar*: 45), was revealed: ‘what hosts are these when we are incapable of protecting ourselves?’ When the Battle of Badr took place and the Muslims were victorious, He said: ‘Allah spoke the truth.’⁽¹⁾:

(1) Included by Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir* and he attributed it to Ibn Abu Hatim (*an-Nisa*: 366) from ‘Ikrima *Allah be pleased with him* who said: ‘When ‘(Yet) the hosts (of those who deny the truth) shall be routed, and they shall turn their backs (in flight)!’ (*al-Qamar*: 45)=

'Their forces will be routed and they will turn tail and flee.' (*al-Qamar*: 45) The might of Islam had indeed intensified, as had the forces of the Muslims, and the nation of disbelief was declared finished. The term of the oppressive, disbelieving nation came to an end and the term of the believing nation had begun.

That is why when we reflect on Allah's words: 'Not equal are the blind and the seeing, nor are the darkness and the light, nor are the shade and the heat and not equal are the living and the dead. Indeed, Allah causes to hear whom He wills, but you cannot make those in the graves hear' (*Fatir*: 19-22), we find four opposites: the first two correspond to Prophet Muhammad's situation with regards to his nation before the spread of Islam, when pre-Islamic paganism was dominant over Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his followers in Mecca. 'The blind' are those who are ignorant of the ruling. 'The seeing' are those who know the ruling. The 'darkness' means misguidance and disbelief, while 'light' is faith because they were blind and Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to make them see. They were in the deep darkness of ignorance and misguidance and Allah *Glorified is He* brought them out of it and into the light of faith.

As for the two other opposites, they correspond to Prophet Muhammad's situation with regards to his nation after the foundations of Islam had been firmly anchored and the souls of the believers had been strengthened. '...nor are the darkness and the light, nor are the shade and the heat and not equal are the living and the dead. Indeed, Allah causes to hear whom He wills, but you cannot make those in the graves hear.' (*Fatir*: 21-22) You will see that it begins with a positive attribute, as it did not say 'scorching heat and no shade' as in '...the blind and the seeing' (*Fatir*: 19). Why? Because what is being discussed here is the nation of victory and the nation of faith, so it was appropriate to begin this pair of opposites with the goodness that is appropriate for this new nation.

= was revealed 'Umar Allah be pleased with him said: 'What hosts are these that shall be routed?' i.e. what hosts will be defeated? 'Umar Allah be pleased with him said: 'On the day of Badr, I saw the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* jumping in his armour and saying: "(Hence, too,) behold, the Allah-conscious will find themselves in (a paradise of) gardens and running waters" (*al-Qamar*: 45), and on that day, I realised what it meant.'

In this meaning, there is a subtle indication that the ‘age of Ignorance’ (of the guidance from Allah) coming to an end and along with it its darkness and blindness, as well as the declaration of the beginning of a new age for the nation of faith that is to remain an oasis of faith, and this is after Allah *Glorified is He* brings them to life with faith after they had been dead in disbelief, as Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: ‘Is a dead person brought back to life by Us, and given light with which to walk among people, comparable to someone trapped in deep darkness who cannot escape? ...’ (*al-An‘am*: 122)

We already clarified the difference between *mayt* and *mayyit*. *Mayyit* refers to someone who, sooner or later, is going to die, even though he is alive now. An example of this is when the True Lord addresses Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘you [Prophet] will certainly die, and so will they...’ (*az-Zumar*: 30) meaning that, eventually, you are going to die. As for *mayt* this is the one who is already dead.

We can therefore say that His words: ‘...whenever their time comes...’ (*Fatir*: 45) refer to the victory of faith over disbelief. ‘...Allah has been watching His servants.’ (*Fatir*: 45) The words ‘*ibad*’ and ‘*abid*’ are both plurals of ‘*abd*’ (slave) and even though they are both plurals for one singular noun, their meanings differ. This is because a human slave is the property of his master, and as long as he is his property, he obeys his commands. The human believer has a choice, for Allah *Glorified is He* addresses him and he chooses to obey or disobey, whereas a slave, for a human, does not disobey his master.

Yes, he may go against Allah’s Command, but he will not go against his human master’s command. How is this so? They say: because Allah *Glorified is He* is the Forbearing, the All-Forgiving. As for the human master, he can never be absolutely devoid of tyranny, transgression, despotism, or autocracy.

The difference between the obedience of the slave who can choose to disobey and the slave who is compelled to obey has been clarified in an example that we gave earlier, in which we have the two slaves: Sa’id and Sa’ad. Sa’id is chained to his master and is unable to break free while Sa’ad is free and unchained. When the master summons them, which of the two is more obedient? There is no doubt that Sa’ad is more obedient than Sa’id because he responds to his

master even though he can choose not to. As for Sa'id, he has no choice but to respond because if he disobeys, his master will pull him back with the chain.

This is how the True Lord created us: with the ability to choose; and given them this precept: '...let those who wish to believe in it do so, and let those who wish to reject it do so...' (*al-Kahf*: 29). That is: whoever wants to obey can do so and whoever wants to disobey can do so. This is how the servants of Allah behave with their Master. If the slave were to say: 'My Lord! You are the One Who created me, gave me sustenance, and provided me with limbs, and you have given me the ability to choose. I am one of Your slaves *'abid*, and for that reason I relinquish my choice in favour of Your choice, and what I desire in favour of what You desire', then this slave has chosen to be forced and subjugated by his Lord in the same way that the skies and the earth are subjugated.

These people are real *'ibad* slaves (servants of Allah). They are the elite of creation because they prefer what Allah *Glorified is He* desires over what they desire. That is why the True Lord talks about them and gives us an image of them: 'The servants of the Lord of Mercy are those who walk humbly on the earth...' (*al-Furqan*: 63). That is to say: they are humble and not arrogant and how can one be arrogant when: '...Indeed, you will never tear the earth [apart], and you will never reach the mountains in height.' (*al-Isra'*: 37)

The True Lord continues describing the servants of the Lord of Mercy: '...and who, when the foolish address them, reply, "Peace"; those who spend the night bowed down or standing, worshipping their Lord, who plead, "Our Lord, turn away from us the suffering of Hell, for it is a dreadful torment to suffer! It is an evil home, a foul resting place!" They are those who are neither wasteful nor stingy when they spend, but keep to a just balance; those who never invoke any other deity beside Allah, nor take a life, which Allah has made sacred, except in the pursuit of justice, nor commit adultery.' (*al-Furqan*: 63 - 68)

These are eight attributes that give us a complete picture of those who deserve to be called the slaves (servants) of Allah. That is why their Lord addresses them in another place: 'Say, "[Allah says], My servants who have harmed yourselves by your own excess, do not despair of Allah's Mercy. Allah Forgives all sins: He is truly the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.'" (*az-Zumar*: 53)

It is due to His Mercy towards His slaves that a good deed wipes out an evil deed, as He *Glorified is He* says, '[Prophet], keep up the prayer at both ends of the day, and during parts of the night, for good things drive bad away— this is a reminder for those who are aware.' (*Hud*: 114)

What is even greater is that Allah's Mercy is not restricted to the wiping out of evil deeds: after repentance, bad deeds can, in fact, become good deeds: 'Except those who repent, believe and do good deeds: Allah will change the evil deeds of such people into good ones. He is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.' (*al-Furqan*: 70)

Regarding the meanings of '*ibad*' (servants of Allah who choose to prefer what Allah desires over what they desire), and '*abid*' (slaves who serve humans and are compelled to obey them) that we have clarified, we have heard those who object and say: there is a contradiction in the Quran concerning this meaning, for Allah says on the Day of Resurrection, addressing the leaders and other personalities who have misguided people and made disbelief pleasing to them: '...Was it you who led astray these My servants, or did they themselves go astray from the path?' (*al-Furqan*: 17) Here, He says: '*ibadi*' (My servants). We say: there is no contradiction between these verses as you say because the discussion here concerns the Hereafter, and in the Hereafter, there is no choice. Thus, there is no difference between '*ibad*' and '*abid*' in the Hereafter.

In His saying: 'Allah has been watching His servants.' (*Fatir*: 45) He mentions the attribute of seeing because it is the strongest means of obtaining knowledge and realisation. Obtaining knowledge has various means that the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions in His saying: 'It is Allah who brought you out of your mothers' wombs knowing nothing, and gave you hearing and sight and minds so that you might be thankful.' (*an-Nahl*: 78)

Hearing is the primary means of realization, and in the case of the newborns, it is the first organ to sense and carry out its task. The proof is that if you put your finger, for example, in front of his eye, he would not blink. However, if you shouted in his ear he would be roused and he would respond to the sound. Furthermore, hearing is the one sense that is not inactive during sleep because it is the only sense by which one can be summoned. Hearing is the primary means of acquiring values and ideals, and with it one receives the way of Allah *Glorified is He*.

As for seeing, even if its rank is secondary, it is greater and stronger than hearing. This is because you could hear of something but not pay attention to it. If you move from hearing to seeing you arrive at full realization that has no doubt about it. That is why they say: 'with the eye you do not ask: "where?"' The thing that you hear could be false, but the thing that you see can be nothing but true.

That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* when He wants to emphasise a piece of information, He says, 'Have you not seen...' (*az-Zumar*: 21). This is because what you see with the eye is certain. When Abu Ja'far said to Muqatil, 'Admonish me Muqatil', he said to him 'Should I admonish you with what I have heard or with what I have seen?'—By Allah, you tell me which one? (Ash-Sha'rawi is addressing the audience)—Abu Ja'far said, 'Admonish me with what you have seen.'

Indeed, this is true because what you hear may be false, but what you see with the eye is the truth.

the chapter of

Ya Sin

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

The chapter of *Ya Sin*⁽¹⁾:

يس وَالْقُرْآنِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿٢﴾

***Ya Sin* [1] By the wise Quran [2]
(The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 1 - 2)**

It is correct that *Ya Sin* are amongst the disjointed letters, such as *Alif*, *Lam*, *Mim* and *Ta Ha* and it is also correct that they are disjointed letters that can be a name. That is why *Ta Ha* and *Ya Sin* are included in Prophet Muhammad's names *peace and blessings be upon him*. There is nothing to stop a name from being composed of two letters, or even just one letter, such as the Arabic letter *nun* in His saying: '*Nun*. By the pen! By all they write!' (*al-Qalam*: 1) '*Nun*' was made a proper name for Dhun Nun⁽²⁾ *peace be upon him*. Likewise, *qaf* became

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- (1) The chapter of *Ya Sin* is number 36 according to the order of the Quran and it consists of 83 verses. It was revealed after the chapter of *al-Jinn*, and it is also said that it was revealed before the chapter of *al-Furqan*. It is the 40th chapter according to the order of revelation. Al-Qurtubi has related in his *Tafsir* (8/5635) the consensus that it is a Meccan chapter, but he says: 'Except that there is one group that says, 'Indeed His words: "...and We shall record whatever (deeds) they have sent ahead, and the traces (of good and evil) which they have left behind..." (*Ya Sin*: 12), were revealed with regard to the Bani Salma from the *Ansar* (Helpers) when they wanted to leave their houses and move in order to live close to Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*.' Ibn Kathir has included this narration in his *Tafsir* (The Quran, 3/566) from Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri but said: 'What has been mentioned regarding the revelation of this verse is strange because the entire chapter is Meccan and Allah *Glorified is He* knows best.
- (2) '*An-Nun*': The whale, and Dhu An-Nun *peace be upon him* is an epithet given to Yunus (Jonah) Ibn Matta *peace be upon him*. Allah called him Dhu An-Nun *peace be upon him* because he held him inside the whale that had swallowed him (The Quran, *Lisan Al-Arab* – under the article on [*nun*]). As for '*noon*', it is in the chapter of *al-Qalam*. There are a few statements regarding it, including the statement that it is the whale and another that=

a proper name for Mount *Qaf*. So, these are disjointed letters and they can become proper nouns and be used as names.⁽¹⁾

We often talk about the disjointed letters at the beginning of chapters. Every time we come across disjointed letters we have to talk about any possible meanings they may have. What is established in the mind is that a letter has a name and a named thing. The name of the letter is only known to the one who is learned. As for the letter's named thing, it is known by both the learned and the illiterate. For example, the illiterate knows the verb *akala* (ate) and he can say: 'I ate' but he cannot tell you the letters of the alphabet that make up the verb because he only knows the named thing of the letter. As for the one who is learned, he knows the name of each letter and can say: *akala* consists of the Arabic letters *alif*, *kaf*, and *lam*. Then, how did Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* know the names of these letters and articulate them as he was unlettered and did not know how to read or write? The answer is that he was taught them by his Lord

The Quran was sent as a miracle to challenge the people in what distinguished them. The Arabs were known for their eloquence and rhetoric. It suffices to say that they held fairs and markets for the sake of speech, as we now spend time in showrooms of prominent industries. Examples for those fairs and

= it is the inkwell. See the narration regarding these statements in the *Tafsir* of Ibn Kathir (The Quran, 4/400, 401). Al-Azhari says: 'Nun' (*al-Qalam*: 1), cannot be other than a letter of the alphabet. Have you not seen that the Quranic scribes have always written it as the letter (*nun*) and if the inkwell or the whale were meant by it they would have written as the word (*nun*)?' *Lisan Al-Arab* – under the article on (*nun*)

- (1) There are a few opinions regarding the interpretation of 'Ya Sin.' (*Ya Sin*: 1):
- It is one of the names of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and this is the opinion of Sa'id ibn Jubayr and his evidence is 'verily, thou art indeed one of Allah's message-bearers,' (*Ya Sin*: 3) and what follows it.
 - It means 'O master of humanity!' and this is the opinion of Abu Bakr Al-Warraq.
 - It means 'O man!' and Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is who is intended, and this is the opinion of Ibn 'Abbas.
- There is another opinion that Al-Qurtubi mentions in his *Tafsir* (The Quran, 8/5638), in addition to what has already been stated, and it is related from Imam Malik that (*Ya Sin*) is one of Allah's names, such that he declared it *makruh* (reprehensible) to use it as a name. Ibn Al-Arabi said: That which is permissible to use as a name is *Ya Sin* with this spelling, and Allah knows best.

markets were the 'Ukazh, Al-Murbiid and Al-Majna markets, etc. which were known amongst the Arabs.

Their concern with speech and rhetorical style was at such a level that their famous poems were hung upon the *Ka'ba*. These poems were called '*al-mu'alaqat*' (the hanging odes) and they were the most famous of what is known as '*jahiliyy*' (pre-Islamic) poetry.

The fact that the Quran challenges them is a testimony to their pre-eminence because it is the strong and not the weak that are challenged. It is just like when records are being broken in various fields, nowadays.

The Quran challenges the Arabs in eloquence and rhetoric in the same way that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* challenged magicians and 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* challenged the doctors. Therefore, this is a practice that is followed with all nations. The True Lord *Glorified is He* challenges them in what distinguishes them. Likewise, the Quran came in the language of the Arabs and the letters and words that they use to articulate. Despite all of this, they were unable to produce anything like the Quran. How can this be when the fabric of the speech is one and the same? It has been said: 'Because the one speaking the Quran is the True Lord'.

We have already clarified this matter by way of similitude—and Allah has the most exalted similitude—and said: if you want to test a group of textile workers to see which one of them is the most skilful, you should not give one of them silk, for example, give another cotton and give a third wool because the raw material, thus, would be different. You must give all of them the same fabric and then see the textile that each of them produces. The same goes for the Quran and the language of the Arabs. The fabric is one and the same, but the speaker in poems is the Arabs, and the speaker in the Quran is the True Lord.

When you consider the letters of the Arabic language you find that there are twenty-eight of them, and the disjointed letters in the Quran are fourteen. Therefore, they are half of the letters of the alphabet. Al-Fakhr Ar-Razi⁽¹⁾ has

(1) He is Muhammad ibn 'Umar Abu Abdullah Fakhr Ad-Din Ar-Razi, Qurayshi of lineage who originated from Tabaristan. He was born in Rayy (modern-day Teheran) in the=

a marvellous table that arranges these letters, and he explains that they were placed as such for a reason, and they were placed according to a measure and calculation. These fourteen letters are divided as follows:

The total number of letters in the language is twenty-eight. The first nine letters, from *alif* through *dhal*, contain only two of the disjointed letters: the *alif* and the *ha`a*. The remaining seven letters are left. As for the last nine letters, from *fa`a* to the end, there are seven of the disjointed letters and they are: *qaf*, *kaf*, *lam*, *mim*, *nun*, *ha`a* and *ya`a* while *fa`a* and *waw* are left. The last nine are therefore the opposite of the first nine.

As for the ten letters in the middle, from *ra`a* through to *ghayn*, they have another arrangement such that the disjointed letters from amongst them do not have diacritical marks. They are *ra`a*, *sin*, *sad*, *ta`a*, and *`ain*, leaving us with *zay*, *sheen*, *dad*, *dha`a* and *ghayn*.

Likewise, when we consider, for example, the letters of the throat you find that *kha`a* is in the first group and is not included in the disjointed letters. *Mim* is included in the last group.

In this manner, we see that these letters were not placed as such haphazardly or accidentally. Rather, they were placed according to a measure and system that has wisdom, and behind it there are secrets. They were placed according to an intended systemization like the cutting of a key. Allah *Glorified is He* opens them to whomever He wills. It is due to His Wisdom that He has not given all the secrets of these letters to one generation. Indeed, He has spread out the revealing of these secrets over time so that every generation can receive Allah's Speech and discover some of its secrets, and so that the Quran can remain a light that illuminates what is hidden in the life of this world until the establishment of the Hour. He says, 'We shall show them Our signs in every

= year 544 A.H. and this accounts for his name Ar-Razi. He was an Imam and Quranic commentator and the unique one of his age in the rational, transmitted, and ancient sciences. It was said about it: 'Where is the speaker of Ray?' The people devoted themselves to his books during his lifetime and studied them amongst themselves. He was also a master of Persian. His various works include (*Mafatih Al-Ghayb* and *Mahhsal Afkar Al-Mutaqadimin Wa Al-Muta`akhirin*). He died in the year 606 at the age of 62. (Az-Zirikli, (*Al-A`lam*) 6/313)

region of the earth and in themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth...' (*Fussilat*: 53).

The letter *sin*, at the beginning of the word *sanurihim* (we shall show them) indicates the future and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* pronounced it and said '...We shall show them...' (*Fussilat*: 53). In his time, many secrets were manifested. The generations that followed also articulated it and many secrets were uncovered to them and we will continue to pronounce them. Many of its secrets will continue appearing to us until the coming of the Hour, when the greatest sign is manifested which is the Day of Resurrection. Therefore, the Quran is continuously giving without any interruption.

That is why, when we discussed with some orientalisists in San Francisco the subject of inventors and explorers who had served and benefited humanity with their inventions and discoveries, one of them said: 'We are astonished at the Muslims. Why do these explorers who have brought joy to humanity not enter Paradise?' We clarified that they had indeed served humanity, but they did not have Allah in mind when they discovered what they discovered (they did not exert that effort for the sake of Allah). Rather, what they were concerned with was fame, glory, and being mentioned amongst people. Thus, they have achieved what they sought, and we have immortalized their memory, erected statues in their honour and so forth. The Hadith describes them as such: 'You worked so that it might be said [of you] such and such, and so it was said.'⁽¹⁾

Thus, these scientists who have served humanity and brought joy to it while not believing in Allah *Glorified is He* are nothing other than servants that Allah has subjugated for the service of humanity. They are like the sun and the moon and other creations that Allah *Glorified is He* has subjugated for the benefit and prosperity of man. They are nothing other than soldiers from amongst Allah's soldiers that are included in the meaning of this letter *sin* in '...We shall show them...' (*Fussilat*: 53) so that the Quran continues to give throughout the passing of time and into the future.

(1) Narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* (*The Quran*, 1905), Ahmad in his *Musnad* (2/322) and An-Nasa'i in his *Sunnan* (6/23, 24) from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him

These scientists who do not believe in Allah *Glorified is He* are like a servant that works for another human. When the master asks him to lift a stone, for example, he tells him that it is too heavy and he cannot lift it. The master, then, suggests that the servant gets someone who can help him, but he says that he cannot find anyone. However, when the master tells him that if he lifts it, he will find some treasure underneath which he can have for himself, he lifts it by himself. Has he lifted it out of respect for his master's command or has he lifted it because he wanted the treasure?

Likewise, with the advancement of science, people have discovered wine to be of harmful effect on the liver, and many people have abstained from drinking it because they fear its harms, i.e. they have done so for a reason. As for the believer, he abstains from it before knowing anything about this reality, and he abstains from it because his Lord has forbidden him from drinking it. He desists it because he trusts in the Wisdom of his Lord and respects His Command, even if he does not know the reason.

Being the heart of the Quran, as established in the Hadith, reading the chapter of *Ya Sin* should be preceded by *isti`adhah* (seeking refuge in Allah from the cursed Satan) and *basmalah* (in the name of Allah, The All-Merciful, The Ever-Merciful), as we did with the chapters preceding it. The True Lord is the one who has revealed the Quran as a miracle and a book of guidance to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so that the believers can regulate their lives according to it. He says, '[Prophet], when you recite the Quran, seek Allah's protection from the outcast, Satan. He has no power over those who believe and trust in their Lord.' (*an-Nahl*: 98)

We said before that the reason behind this command from the Most Exalted is that Satan, when he disobeyed his Lord by refusing to prostrate to Adam *peace be upon him* a conversation started between him and his Lord when he said: 'I swear by Your Might! I will tempt all.' (*Sad*: 82) That is to say: 'I will tempt Adam and his progeny until they do not differ from me in terms of disobedience'. He proceeds: 'Except your servants from among them, the purified ones' (*Sad*: 83). His saying '...I will tempt all' (*Sad*: 82) means that they will take a path other than the path that Allah *Glorified is He* has made for them. The path that Allah *Glorified is He* has made for them is

the straight path of which Satan said: ‘...I will lie in wait for them all on Your straight path.’ (*al-A‘raf*: 16)

Yes indeed, for Satan does not visit people to tempt them at taverns, casinos and other places of disobedience. Instead, he meddles in the affairs of the obedient in order to corrupt their obedience. The straight path, here, is the way of Allah *Glorified is He* that He has laid down for the contentment of humanity. So, Satan, instead of waiting to see what a human’s limbs do in accordance with Allah’s way, either through obedience or disobedience, he targets the foundations from which these limbs base their movements, so if you read the Quran he comes to corrupt your reading.

That is why your Lord teaches you to seek refuge in Him, primarily to block this path of Satan’s because he will not wait until you read and the benefits of this reading manifest in the way you live your life. Indeed, he targets the Quran itself in order to ruin it for you from the outset, so if you want to overcome him, then seek refuge in Allah *Glorified is He* from him.

When you seek refuge from him in Allah, you are seeking refuge in a powerful support and a protective shield, which nothing of Satan’s whispering; his goading or his beckoning can penetrate. That is why Satan was fully aware of this when he said: ‘Except your servants from among them, the purified ones.’ (*Sad*: 83) So, the purified ones are the ones who are protected from Satan in the protection of their Lord and Creator.

As for His words ‘In the name of Allah, The All-Merciful, The Ever-Merciful’, the True Lord created man and made him the master of this universe. Moreover, He subjugated everything for him, and from that which He has subjugated, are its parts for him to use as he pleases. For example, he subjugated man’s tongue for him to use as he pleases, that if he is a believer he says: ‘Allah is One’. If he is not, he says, for example: ‘Allah is the third of three’. Likewise, He has subjugated the eye so that it can look at what is permissible and at what is impermissible; and the same applies to the feet. Allah *Glorified is He* has subjugated all your limbs to your will, and so if you seek obedience they will behave accordingly, and if you want disobedience, they will behave accordingly, too. The will is that which dictates what you want, and the limbs can do nothing but carry out acts of obedience or disobedience because they are subjugated.

Previously, we gave the example of the commander of the army when he sends, for example, the subordinate commander to be the head of a regiment on some mission. The regiment must obey the commands of this immediate commander with blind obedience even if these commands go against what is good for them. They cannot protest against him or even go back to the commander and complain to him about their immediate commander. It is in this way that the limbs obey man's will in this worldly life.

By contrast, in the Hereafter, man's command over his limbs will be stripped from him, and these limbs will bear witness against their owner in front of the True Lord. This is because in the Hereafter no one has authority except Allah *Glorified is He*: '...Who has control today? Allah, the One, the Subduer (of all).' (*Ghafir*: 16) He also says, 'On the day when their tongues and their hands and their feet shall bear witness against them as to what they did.' (*an-Nur*: 24) Allah also says, 'They will say to their skins, "Why did you testify against us?" and their skins will reply, "Allah, who gave speech to everything..."' (*Fussilat*: 21).

If you want to do some action then this action requires from you, first, the rational and mental capacity to delineate it. Then it requires strength from the limbs in order to do it. Who created for you a mind that thinks? Who gave your limbs the strength and capacity to do things? Do they carry out your commands and do as you ask because of some inherent strength within you; or is it because of Allah's Power over them?

Therefore, you must approach every act, thinking, planning, implementing, and doing, by saying 'In the Name of Allah'. When you say it, this is as if you are saying to your limbs: 'I am not making demands of you with my own strength, but by the strength of "In the Name of Allah", and in Allah's Name I act, not by my power'.

If Allah *Glorified is He* wants to strip man of his movement, ability, and thinking, then the limbs will be paralysed and the thought processes will also be paralysed. This is proof that you must approach every action of yours with 'In the Name of Allah', as He is the One helping you to do them.

Moreover, your actions require wisdom, power, knowledge, and so forth. Who is the one who combines all these attributes? Indeed, it is Allah *Glorified is He* so

say ‘In the Name of Allah’: the One Who combines all the attributes of perfection and grants them to His creation. He is the All Knowing who provides you with knowledge; the fully Capable Who provides you with capability; the Wise Who provides you with wisdom *the Almighty* Who provides you with might; the All-Dominant Who provides you with the ability to dominate and so forth.

Have we not heard what the judge says when he sits for a verdict? He says, ‘In the name of the people...’ because he is not giving the verdict by himself. He only gives the verdict by the power of the people. Likewise, the believer says, ‘In the Name of Allah’ with every act, meaning ‘O limbs! Obey me as part of your obedience to Allah’!

The True Lord describes Himself by saying: ‘...The All-Merciful, The Ever-Merciful’ (*al-Fatiha*: 1) because the True Lord created His creation with the ability to choose, so amongst them are the believer and the disbeliever; the obedient and the disobedient. Maybe man is heedless of Allah’s way so he commits minor sins and even major sins. How, then, can he approach his actions with ‘In the Name of Allah’? How can he seek help from Him when he has disobeyed Him?

That is why his Lord says to him: ‘Do not be ashamed to say, ‘In the Name of Allah’ because I am Most Merciful and I dispense mercy. I forgive you and I overlook what you have done, and I will not abandon you. Therefore, have courage and do not leave seeking help in My Name, regardless of whatever sins you have committed, and rely on the fact that I am Most Merciful and I dispense mercy’.

It is related ⁽¹⁾ that Al-Asma’i ⁽²⁾ heard a man saying, while he was making circumambulation around the *Ka’ba*, ‘O Allah! I disobey you and I am ashamed to ask of you, but from whom can I ask when there is no one in the universe

(1) *The story of Al-Asma’i with the man making circumambulation around the Ka’ba while piously praying.*

(2) *Al-Asma’i is Abd Al- Malik Qurayb Al-Bahili Abu Sa’id, the narrator of the Arabs and one of the chief scholars of language and poetry as well as countries. His name goes back to his grandfather, Asma’a. He was born in Basra in the year 132 A.H. and he spent a lot of time travelling in the desert. Many stories are attributed to him. He was the most proficient of people in language and the most knowledgeable of them in poetry. His works include Al-Addad and Khalq Al-Ansan ... Al-Ibl. He died in Basra in the year 216 A.H. at the age of 94. Az-Zirikli, Al-A’lam 4/162)*

besides you?' Al-Asma'i said to him 'O you! Indeed, your Lord has answered you because of the beauty of the way you have stated your supplication to Him.'

When the True Lord wants to enumerate His blessing that He has bestowed upon His servants He says '...If you tried to count Allah's favour you could never calculate it...' (*Ibrahim*: 34). Yes, because when you count something you are expected to arrive at some statistic. Despite the advancement of science and the fact that various universities and institutes are specialised in statistics, no one has ever tried to count Allah's blessings. That is why He did not say 'and if you try to count Allah's *ni'am* (favours)' but rather, one *ni'mah* (favour) because a single favour covers so many favours that we cannot perceive.

You will notice that this verse is found in two places, but each one of them has its own supplement. The first is: '...If you tried to count Allah's favour you could never calculate it...' (*Ibrahim*: 34), and the other is: 'And if you should count the favour of Allah, you could not enumerate it. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.' (*an-Nahl*: 18)

It is as if the True Lord is saying to us: 'You, O man, are blessed, even though you receive Allah's favours with wrongdoing and ingratitude. Your Lord is the One Who bestows favours and He receives your wrongdoing and ingratitude towards His favours by extending these favours, because He is much forgiving and the Ever-Merciful.

The scholars have different sayings regarding '*Ya Sin*'. Some of them say: The *ya*` is vocative and the *sin* is one of Prophet Muhammad's names because it was normal for the Arabs to omit some of the letters of a word and leave the letter that is distinguished by its strong sound. For example, in the word *insan* (a human) it is the *sin* that is the strongest letter. That is why, in another example, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says: 'The sword is a sufficient *sha`*'⁽¹⁾, and what he meant was *shahidan* (witness). In the same vein, the poet said:

(1) From Salma ibn Al-Mahhbuq who said: 'It was said to Abu Thabit, Sa`ad ibn `Iyada, when the verse of prescribed punishments was revealed and a man was very jealous: "Have you not considered what you would do if you found a man with your wife?" He said: "I would strike them with my sword. Would I wait until I brought four people? Until that time, he had done what he needed to do and left. Or I say: 'I have seen such=

O Fatim! Take it easy with this coquettishness

And if you are resolved to leave me then say it once and for all ⁽¹⁾

And what is meant is Fatima.

In our daily speech, we also abridge some letters, so when we say, for example: 'O Ahmad', some of us do not say the *dal* (d), especially in the dialect of Damietta. Therefore, the omission of some letters and leaving the others that have a strong sound is something normal in the language of the Arabs.

Others say: *Ya Sin* is Muhammad's name and he is being addressed while the vocative *ya`a* is omitted.

The True Lord taught man the names of all things, which means that he taught him the speech that is required for conversation. While human beings speak and converse, they devise new names and terms. For example, people now know the word 'television' and they are familiar with it. Did Allah *Glorified is He* teach Adam *peace be upon him* the word 'television'? No, but it is a word that people have devised based on what Allah *Glorified is He* had taught them.

'The names of all things' in the statement: 'And He imparted unto Adam the names of all things...' (*al-Baqara*: 31) refer to those which are suitable for conversing then (at the time when Adam lived on earth), in a primitive environment. It was Adam's duty to develop his language and devise names for this and that.

We know that letters fall into two categories. The first category consists of the 'building' letters. Their function is to form or build the word, without them having any other meaning. An example would be *kataba*: the *kaf*, the *ta`a* and

= *and-such, so let me be struck with a punishment and never accept testimony from me.'* He said: "This was mentioned to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and he said: 'The sword suffices as a witness.'" Narrated by Ibn Majah in his *Sunnan* (2606) and Abu Dawud in his *Sunnan* (4417) The conclusion of the Hadith is: He then said: "I fear that a furious man and a jealous man may follow this course."

(1) This is from an ode of Imru` Al-Qays from the Tawil metre and it consists of 77 verses. It is his renowned 'suspended ode' which begins thus: 'Halt and let us weep in remembrance of a beloved and an encampment As-Saram): a severance or break of relations. The meaning of the meter is:

'O Fatima! Leave aside some of your flirtation and make up your mind regarding separating from me. Tell me once and for all and leave me.'

the *ba`a* are the letters from which the word is built without giving another meaning in addition to the meaning of the verb that these letters have produced.

The second category consists of the letters of meaning, and they are the letters that have a meaning that independently signifies them, as in *katabtu* (I wrote). The final *ta`a* has a meaning that is different from the meaning of writing. This is because it indicates a first-person subject. If it has a *fatha*; i.e. *katabta* (you wrote) then it indicates a second person subject and if it has a *kasra* i.e. *katabti* (you, female, wrote) it indicates a second person female subject.

We have stated that the name of a letter can be the proper name of something, as in the example of *sin*, which is the name of a known river (Seine). *`Ain* is an unintelligible letter, yet, many things are called by it, such as: *`ain* (the seeing eye/s); *`ain* (a spring of water); *`ain* (a spy) and having an eye; and *`ain* (precious things like gold and silver).

In His saying: 'By the wise Quran' (*Ya Sin*: 2), this letter *waw* (*by*) is called the *waw* of swearing as it is used in making oaths. However, is that which the speaker wants from the addressee coming by way of oath or by way of evidence? It is coming by way of evidence because an oath can contain an indication of a desired purpose. For example, your companion says to you: 'O brother! You do not appreciate me. I was in a crisis and you did not stand by my side'. You respond to him (in Egyptian dialect): 'By the life of the cheque that I wrote for you on such-and-such day; by the life of the gift that you accepted from me on such-and-such day!' So, you swear to him by the evidence of your truthfulness.

Likewise, here, the True Lord is saying to His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'you have been sent and I swear by the Quran because it is a proof that you are a true messenger'.

The word Quran is the verbal noun of the verb *qara`a* (past form of read), and if there is an addition to the original root letters, then there must be an increase in meaning. We say *Quranan* to distinguish between the reading of the Quran and the reading of anything else. It also indicates that it is a book that is recited. In other times, it is called 'The Book' because it is written down. Thus, the Quran is recited from the hearts and written down in lines.

The Quran is also called *Adh-Dhikr* (The Remembrance) because it reminds us of the primordial covenant in which Allah *Glorified is He* says, '[Prophet], when your Lord took out the offspring from the loins of the children of Adam and made them bear witness about themselves, He said, "Am I not your Lord?" and they replied, "Yes, we bear witness." So, you cannot say on the Day of Resurrection, "We were not aware of this."' (*al-A 'raf*: 172)

This reminder of the first covenant is out of Allah's Mercy towards us. It is from His Mercy towards us that He reminds us when we forget or become heedless, from the time that He created Adam *peace be upon him* until now. The True Lord *Glorified is He* reminds His servants, just as a father instructs his son regarding his life, and the first thing he teaches him is the applications of this religion. This instruction and reminding must continue and be passed on from one generation to the next because it is the nature of human beings to be heedless and forgetful, and thus fall into disobedience.

That is why those who said: 'We saw our fathers following this scripture; we are guided by their footsteps' (*az-Zukhruf*: 22) were lying when they said it because Adam *peace be upon him* and his nation were upon guidance in the beginning, so why have you not followed them? Therefore, you have followed your forefathers who were astray, not guided.

Likewise, when you consider how the Quran was compiled you find that those who compiled the Quran used to investigate the verse before recording it in order to be written down. This was done first on a sheet of paper, or pieces of cloth and bones upon which the Quran was first recorded, and then two reciters would testify to its authenticity. Why? They said: 'Because a sheet of paper does not has desires such that it would change what is written on it. As for the man who memorises, he is liable to make mistakes, forget, and be heedless. So, there must be someone else with him to remind him, in accordance with Allah's saying: "...so that if one of the two women should forget, the other can remind her..." (*al-Baqara*: 282).

Allah *Glorified is He* describes the Quran with wisdom, and wisdom is to put things in their proper place so that they can carry out their duties. All religious meanings are derived from sensory perception, before the religion. For example, a man rides a horse in order to get to his destination, but if your intention behind riding the horse is to roam around the fields, then your

journey is very slow like that of a carriage, for example. By contrast, if you want to traverse a long distance, then it will take you like the wind.

That is why they have made a bridle for the horse that is placed on its palate to check its speed and control it. This bridle is called a *hakamah*⁽¹⁾, and from this word is derived the word *hikma* (wisdom) that checks the defiance of desires so that they do not break free, and so that all matters are in their proper place. Indeed, man has desires towards which he inclines, deviate from the main path. The Quran comes with the clear truth that puts this inclination straight and rectifies it. In reality, the Quran is wise because it is perfect and from the Wise, the Most Exalted. Thus, the Quran is speech from the Wise, and with regards to man it is like the horse's bridle.

It is due to the wisdom of the Quran that it has certain distinctions and it is not treated the way other books are treated. I can read a normal book at any time and in any state, even if I am in a state of minor or major ritual impurity. As for the Quran, no one touches it except those who are pure⁽²⁾ because with the Quran you are devoting yourself to something sacred and precious. Beware of handling it whilst being impure, as the True Lord⁽³⁾ says, 'that this is truly

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- (1) *Hakamat Al-Lijam*: what encompasses the palates of the riding beast, and it goes around the mouth of the riding beast. *Al-Hakama* is a piece of iron on the bridle that goes over the nose of the horse and its palate to prevent it from disobeying the one riding it. And in the Hadith: 'There is not a single human being except that he has a bridle (*hakama*) on his head.' In another narration: 'On the head of every slave is a bridle (*hakama*) such that when he intends an evil deed Allah, if He wants to, can restrain him with it. (*Lissan Al-'Arab*) – under the entry on *hakama*.
- (2) *All the Imams have agreed and none of the Companions disputed the prohibition of touching the Quran and carrying it whilst in a state of major ritual impurity. As for minor ritual impurity, Ibn 'Abbas, Ash-Sha'bi, Ad-Dahhak, Zaid ibn 'Ali, Ibn Hazem and others are of the position that it is permissible for a person in this state to touch the Quran. As for reading it without touching it, this is permissible without any argument. Mentioned by Sheikh Sayyid Sabiq in Fiqh As-Sunna 1: 43 and what follows:*
- (3) *There are two statements regarding this verse:*
The first: The 'pure' here are the angels. This was stated by Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid, 'Ikrima, Sa'id ibn Jubair and others. Based on this statement the verse does not refer to reading the Quran with ablution or without ablution.
The second: The 'pure' are those who have purified themselves from both major and minor ritual impurity. What is meant by 'Quran' here is the mushhaf. At-Tabarani and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated from Ibn 'Umar that he said: 'The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him said: 'No one touches the Quran except the pure.'

a noble Quran, in a protected Record that only the purified can touch.’ (*al-Waqi’a*: 77-79) The True Lord has placed these spiritual rules for you so that you know that you are approaching a book that has a distinction over all other books.

Likewise, the Quran has certain distinctions in its letters, and letters are that which words are comprised of as they are an expression of vocal tones. Each one of them has a place in the organs of speech. For example, the letters that are articulated from the throat and chest are: *Hamza*, *‘ain* and *ha’a*. The two that do not have diacritical marks are *ghayn* and *fa’a*.

If we move on from the throat area, we find the tongue letters, i.e. those that are articulated from the tongue, beginning from the oropharynx to the middle and then the tip. For example, the letter *qaf* is articulated from the farthest part of the tongue, the *sheen* and *jeem* from the middle, while the *dad*, *lam* and *ra’a* are from the tip. There are also letters that are articulated from the lips, such as the *fa’a* which comes from the inside of the lower lip, the *ba’a* which comes from the inside of both lips and the *waw* which is also articulated from both lips.

To ensure that we read the Quran correctly, we must stick to these vocal places of articulation, which is unlike reading any other book, as no other book stipulates this condition. That is why we say: ‘Indeed the perfection of the Quran cannot be violated as long as there is a specific way and a precise tone which must be observed’.

For example, if you were giving a normal speech, you would say: ‘Gentlemen! May Allah’s Peace, Mercy, and Blessings be upon you! I have been invited by so-and-so to meet him in such-and-such place. ...’ If you were to say these words in the tone and style of the Quran it would be unacceptable, but if you apply this tone to the words of the Quran, then it is beautiful and appropriate.

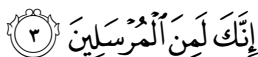
Therefore, the perfection of the Quran is never violated, even in its articulation because it is something that is specific to it and different from all other kinds of speech. If you applied the particularities of the Quran to any other kind of speech it would be seen as absurd and thus be rejected.

I remember when we were young and they used to advise us to read books of literature such as the books of Al-Manfaluti like *Al-Ibarat* or *An-Nazharat*, so

that we would learn how to write in an elegant style. In fact, our style improved and progressed by reading books of literature, and we learned new expressions from them. If you went to someone who had memorised the Quran and can recite it in the ten variant readings, or the fourteen, and you read a word from a book to him or even an article, his style of reading the Quran would not be affected. Why? This is because the perfection of the Quran is never surpassed.

Thus, we understand that the wisdom of the Quran came from this distinctiveness. There is wisdom in its letters; in its words; in its tone; its recitation and its style that cannot be matched or applied to anything else.

Then, the True Lord says:



**You [Muhammad] are truly one of the
messengers sent [3] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 3)**

This is the response of the oath in the preceding verse that we have discussed. The True Lord is responding to the disbelievers of Mecca and swearing an oath to them: ‘Indeed you, O Muhammad, are from the messengers sent’. When the one speaking sees that the one he is speaking to is merely unfamiliar with what he is talking about, he speaks to him normally without any emphasis. However, if this person is doubtful of what is being said to him, or he rejects it, then the one speaking emphasises what he is saying to an extent that is commensurate with the doubt or rejection.

That is why the True Lord is emphasising His speech with more than one means of emphasis. ‘You [Muhammad] are truly one of the messengers sent.’ (*Ya Sin*: 3) For emphasis, the True Lord uses *`inna* (truly) and *lam* (indeed), and this is preceded by an oath because the disbelievers were rejecting Prophet Muhammad’s message, and the emphasis of the speech is commensurate with the rejection.

In this regard, you may also consider His words: ‘We sent two messengers, but they rejected both. Then We reinforced them with a third. They said, “Truly, we are messengers to you.”’ (*Ya Sin*: 14) The result was rejection:

‘but they answered, “You are only men like ourselves. The Lord of Mercy has sent nothing; you are just lying.”’ (*Ya Sin*: 15) That is why they emphasise their speech with more than one means of emphasis: ‘They said, “Our Lord knows that we have been sent to you.”’ (*Ya Sin*: 16)

We have said that this verse came as a proof and evidence in the form of an oath, as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying: ‘The one who reads the Quran must believe that you, O Muhammad, are a messenger sent by Allah’. Why? It is because they are a nation known by its skill in arts of speech and its high taste for eloquence. No nation, even contemporary ones, ever established exhibitions for speech. As for the Arabs, in their *jahiliyyah* (Pre-Islamic ignorance), established markets and exhibitions for speech in which poets and orators vied with one another every year; such as Al-Murbid, ‘Ukazh, Dhu Al-Majana⁽¹⁾ and others.

Their concern for poetry was to such an extent that they hung their most eloquent poems on the curtains of the *Ka'ba*. As long as the Arabs were a nation noted for speech they had to receive the Quran with this talent of theirs. Its inimitability was not hidden from them, but they rejected it and said that it was magic; that it was poetry; that it was falsehood, and when they had become tired of employing various schemes and plots, from which they had achieved nothing, they said: ‘Why was this Quran not sent down to a distinguished man, from either of the two cities?’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) This means that there was no objection to the Quran other than the fact that it was revealed to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This was their problem with it. Their rhetorical talent could not oppose the Quran or reject it.

That is why, despite their disbelief, they loved listening to the Quran. One of them would conceal his identity and secretly listen to the Quran being read at night by Allah’s Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. Two of them would accidentally meet outside the chambers of Messenger, Muhammad

(1) Abu Bakr Al-Azdi said, in what has been mentioned by Al-Marzuqi in his book, *Al-Azmina Wa Al-Amkina*, in the chapter in the markets of the Arabs: ‘In (*jahiliyyah*) the large markets of the Arabs were thirteen in number, and the first to be built was the market of Dumat Al-Jandal, then Sahhar, then Daba, then Shahhr, then Rabiya Hadramawt, then Dhu Al-Majar, then Natat Khababar, then Al-Mushqir, then Hajr Bil-Yamama, then Mata, then ‘Ukazh, then ‘Adan then San’a’.

peace and blessings be upon him and one of them would ask the other: 'What are you doing here, O so-and-so?' and he would have to say, 'I came to visit my sick aunt'; the other would say 'I came for such-and-such'. This was hardly successful, for one's state reveals the truth of one's words.⁽¹⁾ In this regard, a poet said:

Look at them, everyone has infiltrated

After the gathering of nighttime conversation had ended

Secretly he heads for the chamber of Taha (a name of Prophet Muhammad)

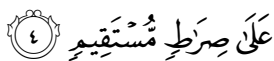
To hear the revelation in the early hours

Excuse them for its beauty. When they see one another

They seek to justify it with the lamest of excuses

That is why when one of them heard the Quran from Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and then returned to his people, they would say: 'So-and-so has returned with a face other than the one he went with.'

Then, the True Lord says:



On a straight path [4]

(The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 4)

As-sirat is the Straight Path, and it has another meaning on the Day of Resurrection. It is the path that is taken over hell and is traversed by the

(1) Ibn Hisham has mentioned in his, *As-Sira An-Nabawwiyah*, (The Quran, 1: 227 in the Dar At-Turath edition), that Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, Abu Jahl and Al-Akhnas ibn Shariq went out one night to listen to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* while he was praying at night in his house. Each one of them found a spot in which to sit and listen and none of them knew where the others were sitting. They would listen to him until the break of dawn and then leave, and then they would bump into each other on the way home. At this point they would start rebuking one another. They would say to each other: 'Do not go back, for if some of your fools saw you, you would put ideas in his head.' Then they left (and this was repeated for three consecutive nights) until on the third night they said to each other: 'We are not leaving until we pledge to one another not to return.' Thus, they pledged to one another and then they departed. In the story there is a position that they changed their minds about what they had heard.

righteous and the wicked, the believer and the disbeliever. Those traversing it will differ according to their deeds in the life of this world. Some will traverse it like a flash of lightning even though it is sharper than a sword and thinner than a hair. Others will traverse it faster than racehorses, and still others will traverse it crawling. Then, there will be others who will fall into hell⁽¹⁾—we seek refuge in Allah from that.

When you traverse the *sirat*, you will not have a stick with which to keep your balance, like a tightrope walker in the circus, for example. That which balances your movement on the *sirat* is the Quran that you clung to in the life of this world. When the believer traverses the *sirat*, his balancing is not from below but from above, from the direction of the Quran; for he will be like a suspension bridge that is not supported by anything from underneath but is strengthened from above by what is holding it and keeping its balance. This is how the believer will be on the *sirat*.

The *sirat* in its general meaning is the straight path that takes you to your destination in the quickest and easiest way, but in the Quran's expression: 'On a straight path.' (*Ya Sin*: 4), there is an indication that the *sirat* has a duty, and it is to take you to the intended destination. Thus, the *sirat* (path) serves you.

We have an example of this where Allah says: 'Such people are following their Lord's guidance...' (*al-Baqara*: 5). Some people understand that guidance requires responsibilities and restriction of movement, and that there is difficulty and hardship in following the guidance, but the wording of the verse has the opposite meaning. The meaning of 'Such people are following their Lord's guidance...' (*al-Baqara*: 5) is that you are upon guidance, and it is like a riding animal that is taking you to your glorious destination. Thus, it is carrying you. You are not carrying it.

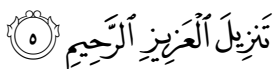
(1) Ahmad narrates from `Aisha Allah be pleased with her that she said: 'The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him said: "Hell has a bridge over it that is thinner than a hair and sharper than a sword and there are hooks on it and spikes that take whomever Allah wills. The people cross it in the blink of an eye, or like lightning, or like racehorses and riders, and the angels say: 'Lord, grant him safety! Lord, grant him safety!', and a saved person is safe and a shamed person is safe, and another is rolled up and thrown into the Fire on his face.'" Narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad (6: 110) and included by Al-Haithami in his Majma' Az-Zawaa'id [10: 359] and he said: 'It includes Ibn Lahima and he is weak but has been relied upon.'

The *sirat* is described as being straight, for we know from the basics of engineering that the straight line is the shortest distance between two points. Thus, when you want to move from one place to another 'from' indicates the starting point and 'to' indicates the desired destination. As long as you are only concerned with the starting point and the destination, then facilitation requires that you take the quickest and shortest of ways, which is the straight line. This is because every starting point in the road or curve will constitute a two-sided triangle in the line of travel and the straight path is the third side.

It is known that the total of any two sides of a triangle is longer than the third. Therefore, the path is longer for you. That is why the Quran talks to us about *al-sirat al-mustaqim* (the straight path); and about *sawa`a as-sabil* (the even path): *sawa`a* means that its right side is equal to its left side.

Why is the path of the believers a straight path? Because Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who has ordained it as a way for His creation and because it is sent down from Allah *Glorified is He*.

Then, the True Lord says:



**With a revelation from the Almighty, the
Lord of Mercy [5] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 5)**

When you hear the word *tanzil* (a revelation sent down) (*Ya Sin*: 5), you know that it is from an upper direction, even if that which is sent down is in the depths of the earth because it been sent from above, as Allah says: '...We also sent down iron, with its mighty strength and many uses for mankind...' (*al-Hadid*: 25). Iron is only found in the earth, but you should look at the highness of its Creator. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* has given it two attributes: a worldly attribute and a religious attribute. '...We also sent down iron, with its mighty strength and many uses for mankind...' (*al-Hadid*: 25). The mighty strength is for the enemies of Allah *Glorified is He*. '...so that Allah could mark out those who would help Him and His messengers though they cannot see Him...' (*al-Hadid*: 25), and this is for the Hereafter. It also contains benefits for man i.e. in the life of this world. That is why we find that it is a metal that is widely benefitted from and it is the strongest and most firm.

In Allah's saying: '...the Almighty, the Lord of Mercy' (*Ya Sin*: 5), He is mentioning here the Attribute of Might and the Attribute of Mercy because that which is being bestowed from on high is a way that restricts man's movement by telling him to 'do such-and-such' and 'do not do such-and-such'. You have the choice to obey or disobey. The True Lord who has ordained this way for you, wants good for you, because He is not increased in the slightest by your obedience and He is not harmed by your disobedience.

Thus, it is you who are intended in this matter because Allah *Glorified is He* is Almighty over His creation and Gracious towards them. Thus, if you see someone who is disobedient and contravening Allah's way, know that Allah *Glorified is He* is Almighty and capable of exacting revenge. No one is able to save a human from His grasp. On the other hand, if you look at the one who is obedient, know that Allah *Glorified is He* is Merciful.

Then, the True Lord says:

لِنُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أُنْذِرَ آبَاؤَهُمْ فَهُمْ غَافِلُونَ ﴿٦﴾

**To warn a people whose forefathers were not warned,
and so they are unaware [6] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 6)**

'*Indhar* (warning) is to induce fear of something that is lethal and destructive. It is a condition that the warning comes before something happens so that the warning can fulfil its task of preventing man from doing wrong; so that he does not fall into that which will destroy him, and thus he is able to protect and save himself.

The meaning of '...whose forefathers were not warned...' (*Ya Sin*: 6) is as follows: whenever you hear the particle *ma* you assume that it indicates negation, and this is what the Quranic commentators have said. They have said: 'because they—the forefathers—were people of heedlessness, and lived in a time when there were no messengers and so they did not have a messenger to warn them'. Additionally, if we say: 'Indeed Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent as a warner for all of mankind, including the Jews and the Christians', they say: 'He is not a warner unto us because warners have already come to us before him. Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* came to us and 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* came to us.

The solution to this problem is to say: 'Yes, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* did indeed warn his people, and 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* did indeed warn his people, but many years have elapsed since then and the people have differed amongst themselves and gone astray, and no warner has come to bring them back from their misguidance. So, a warner did come to you, but you failed to continue paying heed to his warning, and here is Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who has come to you as a new warner.

Ma, here may have the meaning of a relative pronoun, i.e. to warn a people with what their forefathers had been warned before them, meaning: you are not the first of the messengers.

In His saying: '...and so they are unaware' (*Ya Sin*: 6), *ghafla* (heedlessness) indicates that something occurs to your mind, but then your heart is not attached to it, so eventually it is forgotten. Thus, you do not remember it until someone comes and draws your attention to it, and reminds you of it. Forgetfulness is not a function of the heart but of the intellect and the memory; for if the heart is attached to something, then, whenever heedless occurs this attachment of the heart blocks it, and thus it remains in the memory and you do not become heedless of it.

لَقَدْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَى أَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٧﴾

**The verdict has been passed against most of them,
for they refuse to believe [7] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 7)**

The True Lord recorded in pre-eternity every response of those who receive any kind of religious call; the believers and the disbelievers, but He granted mankind the freedom of choice. He records what will be done by mankind. Then, the events happen according to what has been recorded. This means that what he said in pre-eternity is the truth.

The Quran says at one point: '...The verdict has been passed...' (*Ya Sin*: 7), and at another time '...the sentence has already been passed...' (*Hud*: 40), and in another place '...When the verdict is given against them...' (*an-Naml*: 82). All these verses indicate that what Allah *Glorified is He* already knew regarding those who have the choice, and thus choose guidance or misguidance, is

recorded with Him. It is true just as Allah *Glorified is He* has informed us, and if it were the case that the slave could not choose we would say: ‘Indeed Allah has compelled him to do as He has willed’, but in fact, he has the choice.

The True Lord has Absolute Power and Absolute Knowledge, and His Knowledge of whatever will be is recorded and written down. We already clarified this matter when we spoke about Abu Lahab: ‘May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined! May he be ruined too.’ (*al-Masad*: 1) When he heard this verse, Abu Lahab could have declared himself to be a believer, even if he did not mean it, and then accuse the Quran of lying, but he did not do this— even though he had the choice — and remained in his state of disbelief until Allah’s information regarding him came true.

Likewise, in His words: ‘...and say inwardly, “Why does Allah not punish us for what we say?”’ (*al-Mujadala*: 8) It is something amazing on their part, after the Quran had disgraced and had informed them of what they say inwardly, that they did not believe in it or ask themselves: who had informed Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about their thoughts? Had it been the case that they did not say this inwardly, then they would have confronted Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said: ‘We did not do such thing’.

They denied the mission of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* although he informed them of some invisible matters unknown to human minds. After denying his message, they wanted to affirm that he was above a human messenger— a God. However, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* told them, ‘I am a messenger, not God. The prior word expresses what happened to those people; they did not believe and rejected stubbornly, ‘Indeed, the word [of Allah’s condemnation] is bound to come true against most of them, for they will not believe’ (*Ya Sin*: 7). They even said that angels sometimes wonder when something happens in the universe in conformity with information they have in the Book. The angels then exclaim, ‘How Knowledgeable and Powerful our Lord is’! Everything happens just as He said! However, human beings have absolute freedom of choice.

Philosophers attempted to explain the verse: ‘Indeed, the word [of Allah’s condemnation] is bound to come true against most of them: for they will not believe’ (*Ya Sin*: 7) saying, ‘the Lord allows human beings freewill. Simply,

they accepted to assume the responsibility of free choice. Unlike heaven, earth and the mountains among other things that refused free choice and, instead, are completely subject to Allah and His will.

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 ignorant' (*al-Ahzab*: 72).

The Lord *the Exalted* allowed them choice. The heavens, earth, and mountains refused, but man, deluded by intellect, intelligence, and independence, accepted the choice. Allah declared that man was wicked and ignorant. Man is wicked because of wronging himself with bearing that great responsibility. He is ignorant because he declared responsible but failed to carry out his duty. An intelligent person envisages the time of fulfilment before taking duties on. A friend may come to you to deposit an amount of money as trust. You think it easy for you to accept it in determination to give it back when requested. However, you cannot be certain that your own circumstances will not change. You may need the money or face spiritual change! Here, human ignorance lies in human carelessness about the time of fulfilment. As such, man wrongs himself by bearing duties beyond his abilities. Simply, human desires are very strong and may lead him to sins.

They said that two matters judge the entire world; the seen and the unseen. It is amazing that the seen is evidence of the unseen; what you see tells of what you do not see. To teach people how to believe in Allah, encourage them to look at the creation of skies and earth: 'Now among His signs are the night and the day, as well as the sun and the moon: [hence,] adore not the sun or the moon, but prostrate yourselves in adoration before Allah, who has created them – if it is Him whom you [really] worship' (*Fussilat*: 37).

'For among His signs is this: you see the earth lying desolate – and lo! When We send down water upon it, it stirs and swells [with life]! Verily, He who brings it to life can surely give life to the dead [of heart as well]: for, behold, He has the power to will anything' (*Fussilat*: 39).

After you have reflected on Allah's kingdom and His signs in the universe, and thus believe in Him, he gives you other issues that your mind cannot

comprehend. Why? Because Allah *Glorified is He* wants faith in Him to be based on two aspects: that you believe in what can be seen, and that you accept, when you have come to believe in what can be seen, the existence of truth, and He is the Lord who exists by necessity, and you hear Him. Thus, if He informs you of something that your intellect cannot comprehend you must accept it as part of your faith in Him.

If He says to you that the *sirat*, for example, is thinner than a hair and sharper than a sword you do not reject it, even though your intellect cannot comprehend it. This is because Allah, the legislator, is the one saying it. You are therefore taking that which can be seen as evidence for that which is unseen, and it is Allah. From the evidence of the unseen, which is Allah, you have taken your faith in the things that your intellect cannot comprehend, so it is as if the seen and the unseen are the axis upon which faith and other things revolve.

The requirements of professing the religion are either necessary for the heart or limbs and tongue. What is required of the heart is the creed that one believes in the One who exists by necessity, and that He is One. One must also believe that He must have conveyed a way for me to conduct my life because He is the One Who created me and I am His making. The maker is the one who determines the principles of maintenance for what has been made, and the principles of maintenance have to be conveyed.

The Lord *the Exalted* does not talk to His creation one at a time, but rather, He chooses for the task – the task of conveying from Him – whomever He wishes from the angels and from human beings. The one chosen from the angels conveys to the one chosen from the human beings. The one chosen from the human beings conveys to the rest of the people. That is why the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* developed an Islamic nation in twenty-three years, and had it been the case that each individual waited for Allah to speak to him individually the development of the nation would have taken a lot more time.

Therefore, conveying from Allah necessarily follows His Existence. If not, it would be the case that Allah did exist but you would not know that Allah *Glorified is He* is One and has no partner. You cannot know these things by yourself. There must be a messenger to inform you about the Lord and His Names, Attributes and instructions needed from you.

It is easy to refute the worship of the sun, moon, trees, or rocks based on the following: What is worship? Worship is the worshipper's obedience of the one worshipped in commands and proscriptions. We go on to say, what are commands and proscriptions of the sun? What rewards has it prepared for worshippers? What has it prepared for those who disobey it? This is therefore a deity without any method (for conducting your life) and without any commandments, so it is false and rejected.

For further clarification, if someone came and knocked on the door, we all without doubts think of a person who wants to come in. None of us knows who is there, why he comes, where he comes from, or whether he brings glad tidings or warning. We will certainly differ in these matters.

We must stop at the point upon which we all agree: there is someone knocking on the door. We leave it to this person to explain who he is. We say, 'who are you'? He says, 'I am so-and-so and I come for such-and-such'. Likewise, the creation of this miraculous universe is sufficient to indicate that the Lord is All Knowing, All-Powerful, and All-Wise. His are all Attributes of Perfection. When it comes to the question: Who is He? What does He want from you? The Messenger's mission is to convey that from Allah.

Philosophers failed to stop at understanding the One Who exists by necessity and wanted to imagine Him. This is their mistake. Had they limited themselves to what they understand, it would have been sufficient. You ask: Who are you? What do you want from me? What have you prepared for me if I obey you? What will you do to me if I disobey you? He then sends messengers to answer all these questions. Sincere followers of religions should adopt this way. We believe that Allah does exist by necessity; He is One and Unique. He sends truthful messengers, backed by miracles, to convey from Him. This is clear and rational. After you have come to believe in these clear, rational, and visible matters, He informs you of unseen things that have no evidence, e.g., paradise and its joys, good food and a need-free life there. These matters are beyond human intellect, but who is informing you of them? It is Allah, the Truthful Speaker. You already believe in Him and trust in His words.

We are incessantly in need to be in real contact with the Lord in whom we believe. As such, the five prayers are prescribed to have a devotional constant

access. They are five prayers in performance and fifty in reward. The fifty prayers meant to cover the twenty-four hours. It is from Allah's Mercy that He made them five in terms of action and fifty in terms of reward. However, people are still impatient with them.

I remember when we were in Mecca, at the Sacred Mosque, that the calls to prayers followed one another giving us no enough opportunity to sit in the Mosque and reflect on our surroundings. Sheikh Ahmad *Allah rest his soul* often said, 'Stand up and pray!' In response, we said to him, 'O Sheikh Ahmad! We came here for *Hajj* and did not come for prayers.'

Evidently, prayers are five to encompass the entire day and night and you establish constant devotion to Allah. Once in prayers, you find one has two units, one has three, and one has four units without being aware of the wisdom behind these numbers. It suffices for you to say that it is Allah Who prescribes them as such. You do not live in society by yourself, but with other people; some are weak, poor, or needy. These people must live just as you must live, so you are obliged to help them with obligatory and voluntary charities. Allah also legislates fasting for you as a form of worship. It distances you from going against the Divine commands until uprightness becomes deeply rooted in you. Allah loves enthusiastic worshippers who obey His commandments persistently. He permits in *Sha'ban* what He forbids in *Ramadan*.

The tongue articulates words, some Quranic words you understand and others are beyond your intellect. The introductory beginnings of some Quranic chapters, for example, are beyond the abilities of our intellects, whereas other parts are perceivable to human intellects. There is difference between the one who accepts something because he comprehends it and the one accepting something without comprehension. Simply, the Lord wants it. We already gave an example of a master who has workers in his house. He commands one of them to move a stone from a place to another. However, he replies 'I cannot do it myself; I am going to ask a colleague to help me'. The master then says, 'There is some money underneath it that you can have'! Hearing this, he moves the stone himself. Therefore, did he move it for a reason or because of a command? He did it for a reason. Faith is not like that. Faith is not for a reason; faith is sheer obedience.

‘Indeed, the word [of Allah’s condemnation] is bound to come true’ (*Ya Sin*: 7) means that His word comes just as decreed and recorded. His saying ‘...against most of them...’ (*Ya Sin*: 7) proves that some of them would believe, even if it is just one man. Allah’s saying, ‘For they will not believe’ (*Ya Sin*: 7) indicates most of them will never accept faith. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا فِيْ أَعْنَاقِهِمْ أَغْلَالًا فَهِيَ إِلَى الْأَذْقَانِ فَهُمْ مُّقْمَحُونَ ﴿٨﴾

[It is as if] We had placed [iron] collars around their necks, right up to their chins so that their heads are forced up [8] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 8)

In this verse, the Lord *the Exalted* gives an image of the state of the disbelievers, who are opposed to following the truth. He says, ‘Behold, around their necks We have put shackles, reaching up to their chins, so that their heads are forced up’ (*Ya Sin*: 8). *Aghlal* is a plural and its singular is *ghul* (i.e. shackle). It is a piece of iron that grips the hands and ties it under the chin. When the hands are tied under the chin, the head is forced up; one is forced to look up as well, making it almost impossible to see where one is going and where their feet are. This image is also clear in the meaning of the word ‘heads are forced up (*muqmahun*)’ (*Ya Sin*: 8). *Muqmih* is taken from camel’s moving its head high. It does so when it drinks water; it sips it and then it raises its head.⁽¹⁾ Some said, ‘Indeed this is an image that the Lord *the Exalted* has drawn of the one who shackles his hands from giving in charity and spending on others. Likewise, his hands are chained to the neck on the Day of Resurrection; the way you chose to live this life affects you in the coming life. The Lord *the Exalted* always creates a balance between what the one deserving the reward has done and the reward itself; the reward is equal to one’s actions. For example, Allah says: ‘But as for all who lay up treasures of gold and silver and do not spend them for the sake of Allah’s cause, Give them the tidings of grievous suffering [in the life to come] on the Day when that [hoarded wealth] shall be heated in the fire of hell and their foreheads and their sides and their

(1) Al-Jawhari says, ‘The camel raises its head (*qamaha*) and is *qamih* when it has raised its head from the pond and it has finished drinking, so it is a *qamih* camel. *Lisan Al-`Arab* – under the entry *qamaha*

backs branded therewith, [those sinners shall be told:] “These are the treasures which you have laid up for yourselves! Taste, then, [the evil of] your hoarded treasures!” (at-Tawba: 34-35): (i. e. the reward).

These three human places: foreheads, sides, and backs come in this sequence in order to correspond completely with what the possessor of wealth did, i.e. hoarding his wealth and withholding it from the poor. The poor person came to him and he would turn his forehead away from them and give them his side. Then he would turn his back to them and walk away. Their punishment is according to what they did. The Lord *the Exalted* says:

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ سَدًّا وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا فَأَغْشَيْنَاهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٩﴾

And set barriers before and behind them, blocking their vision: they cannot see [9] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 9)

Does this mean that Allah *Glorified is He* will help them in disbelief? They said, ‘Yes, because when I call my slave and he refuses to respond to me and disobey me, I assist him in disbelief. Simply, I am a Lord that has no need of any. If he loves disbelief and adores it and there is no hope for him to restore guidance, I seal his heart. Faith will not enter it and disbelief will not exit from it. No one disbelieves in defiance of Allah, but rather, he disbelieves because of the freewill divinely embedded in man’. Allah *Glorified is He* is the Lord and Creator of all. He assists all to fulfil their intents, be they believers or disbelievers. That is why Allah *the Exalted* has sealed the hearts of disbelievers. He says, ‘We have set a barrier before them’ (*Ya Sin*: 9), i.e. placed in front of them an obstruction and an impediment ‘and a barrier behind them’ (*Ya Sin*: 9). It is a material barrier that is outside the creation of man ‘We have enshrouded them’ (*Ya Sin*: 9), i.e. We have put over their eyes a shroud and a veil. They are hindered from the truth of things. In themselves we have shrouded their eyes so that they do not see and they are not guided. From their inside, they themselves have not remembered the primordial covenant they made with Allah. As to the outside, they do not pay attention to the method in front of them or behind them. There is an obstacle preventing them. Had they remembered what was awaiting them, they would have abstained from

transgression. Had they considered what had befallen the past denies and the divine punishment that snatched them, they would have gone back.

A barrier in front of them prevents them from knowing what was awaiting them and another behind so as not to reflect on the destiny of past peoples about whom Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'For every one of them did We take to task for his sin: Upon some of them We let loose a deadly storm wind. Some of them were overtaken by a [sudden] blast. Some of them We caused to be swallowed by the earth; and some of them We caused to drown⁽¹⁾' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40).

They are surrounded by obstacles and have no hope to return to the way of truth. It is correct that the meaning of 'We have set a barrier before them and a barrier behind them' (*Ya Sin*: 9) is an impediment that prevents them from reflecting on the rational evident proofs in front of them. The 'barrier behind them' prevents them from being aware of the primordial state of belief instilled in them.⁽²⁾ The Lord *the Exalted* says:

(1) These are the four categories of punishment:

- a. '...upon some of them We let loose a deadly storm-wind' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40): they are the people of 'Ad. *Hasib* is a wind that is bitterly cold and blows very violently and strongly, carrying over them the pebbles of the earth and its sand and stone.
 - b. 'Some of them were overtaken by a [sudden] blast' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40): they are the people of Thamud. A blast or shout came to them which subdued all their sounds and movements.
 - c. 'Some of them We caused to be swallowed by the earth' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40): this is Qarun. Allah caused him and his house to be swallowed by the earth.
 - d. Some of them We caused to drown' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40): this is Pharaoh, his minister Haman and their armies who were drowned entirely in one morning
- (2) In his commentary of this verse (3/564) Ibn Kathir relates from Muhammad ibn Ka'ab Al-Qurtubi, that Abu Jahl said to the leaders of the Quraysh while they were sitting: 'Indeed Muhammad claims that if you follow him, you will be kings and that when you die you will be resurrected and you will have gardens that are better than the gardens of Jordan. If you go against him, you will be killed and then resurrected after your death and then you will have a fire in which you will be punished.' At that point, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* came out to them and in his hand had a handful of dust. Allah had shrouded him from their eyes so he proceeded to scatter it on their heads while reading, "O you human being! Consider this Quran full of wisdom." (*Ya Sin*: 1-2) until he finished at His saying, "Verily, We shall indeed bring the dead back to life; and We shall record whatever [deeds] they have sent ahead, and the traces [of good and evil] which they have left behind: for of all things do We take account in a record clear" (*Ya Sin*: 9). The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings=*

وَسَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

**It is all the same to them whether you warn them or not:
they will not believe [10] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 10)**

Parity here is in reference to them, not in reference to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. The Prophet's duty is only to convey the message. As long as he has conveyed it to them, he has done his job. Allah simply says to them, 'Relax and do not grieve, for whether you warn them or not, it is the same'. Indeed, warning them establishes evidence against them. They previously vowed, 'As it is, they [who are averse to the truth often] swear by Allah with their most solemn oaths that if a warner should ever come to them, they would follow his guidance better than any of the communities [of old had followed the warner sent to them]. Yet, when a warner has come unto them, [his call] but increases their aversion' (*Fatir*: 42).

Allah *the Exalted* then says:

إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الذِّكْرَ وَخَشِيَ الرَّحْمَنَ الْغَيْبِ
فَبَشِّرْهُ بِمَغْفِرَةٍ وَأَجْرٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿١١﴾

**You can warn only those who will follow the Quran and hold the
Merciful One in awe, though they cannot see Him: give such
people the glad news of forgiveness and a noble reward [11]
(The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 11)**

In other words, your warning, O Muhammad, benefits those who remember Allah and fear Him; they believe in Him and in His ability to resurrect the dead and call them to account. Contrary to this category, there are the deniers who get no benefit from warnings.

= *be upon him* went off to do what he needed to do, while they spent the night watching his door. He confronted them afterwards, coming out of the house, and asked: "What is with you?" They said: "We are waiting for Muhammad." He said: "He has left and he did not leave a single man from amongst you except that he put some dust on his head and then went to do what he needed to do." Thus each man from amongst them began to shake the dust off his head.' This has also been mentioned by As-Suyuti in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* (7/43) and he attributed it to Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Mandhur, Ibn Abu Hatim and Abu Na'im in *Ad-Dala'il*.

Khashya (awe) refers to the fear mixed with reverence. You fear Allah and you revere Him. Likewise, you have hope in Him. Fearing others than Allah is fear with antipathy because it is fear of tyranny. That is why the attribute of Mercy comes after awe 'who stands in awe of the Most Gracious' (*Ya Sin*: 11). You fear the one described with affection and tenderness. This is more conducive; it makes you love and have affection for the one you fear. Your awe of Him is coupled with reverence, respect, and hope. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'who stands in awe of the Most Gracious' (*Ya Sin*: 11) so that you do not shun the one you fear.

This believer's awe of the Lord manifests when he is absent from people by himself. Indeed, he fears Allah, not people, and needs no one to watch him. A human being watching a human being is of no benefit; whatever deceit and deception works for the observed and the observer alike. When you make the observer do a surprise investigation there is no room for deception.

We gave an example of a traffic man. A car driver must fulfil some conditions to have a driving permit ensuring the safety of the car and the driver's ability to drive the car after passing the necessary tests in this regard. Despite this, there are those of us who adhere to the traffic laws and those that do not. We place a traffic man to observe and regulate the flow of traffic in streets and he has someone who observes him. However, when they discover that the traffic man could engage in fraud such that he revokes the permit of someone who breaks the traffic laws but then pretends to be unaware of someone else, they introduce observation equipment, such as radar in order to be more exact. Now, who uses this equipment? Human beings, of course use it. So, what works for them works for others.

When the observer and the observed are the same, the observation process is useless. If we want to place an observer for each one, we would need an army of security guards. What about observing the entire world! Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came with a perfect message unrestricted to times or places. The time and place delineate events because they are the vessels of events. If the event does not exist, there is no time and no place. That is why it is not correct to speak of 'where?' and 'when?' about Allah. Simply, 'where' and 'when' are created by Allah. The time and place both govern the

event, but the place is a fixed vessel while time is changing, dawn, noon, etc. We say this is before such-and-such or after such-and-such.

The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* came with a universal Message in time and place to remain until the Final Hour. He came with a method to preserve humanity throughout the world in different environments, peculiarities, and eras. How can this preservation and observation come true? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came with a way that governs the entire world in time and place. It is not sound to place an observer, who is of the same species over every single person. The best way is to instil the fear of Allah in souls and hearts of humankind openly and secretly. This constant observer never lies about you or leaves you for a moment. Once⁽¹⁾ a woman was seduced by a man into a deserted place where no one could see them. He said to her, 'What is keeping you from me? No-one can see us except the celestial bodies.' She responded, 'You fool! Where is the Creator of the celestial bodies?' This is the awe of the Most Gracious when one is away from people.

It is related⁽²⁾ that during the time of 'Adud Ad-Dawlah, a Buyhid governor under the Abbasid nominal caliphate—noted for intelligence and justice, a man went to the Baghdad market to sell a precious necklace so he could perform *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca), but he found no buyers for his precious necklace. The man then passed by a respected old man with signs of righteousness and said, 'This is a trustworthy man and I will entrust him to hold onto the necklace until I return from *Hajj*.' When he returned from *Hajj*, he asked the old man to give him the necklace, but the old man denied all knowledge of it. All attempts to retrieve the necklace failed. Someone walking past them said, 'O you! Indeed, this man is a crook and a liar. Go to 'Adud Ad-Dawlah. He will get the necklace for you with his intelligence and subterfuge. The man followed the advice and told 'Adud Ad-Dawlah his story. He replied, 'Go tomorrow and sit next to this man. I will pass by you with my retinue. Do not stand up for me. If I speak to you, then respond while sitting. Leave it me to sort out this matter.' The following day 'Adud Ad-Dawlah passed by with guards and retinue, surrounded by members of his court with

(1) The story of the man who told the woman 'The moon sees us save the planets in the wilderness and her answer to him

(2) The story of Al-Mu'tadid with a man selling a valuable necklace in the market of Baghdad

his elaborate sceptre and much wealth and grandeur. He looked at the owner of the necklace and said, 'O so-and-so! How long have you been here? Why did you not inform me of your presence to receive you and give you your right? The old man heard this speech and thought that the man was an acquaintance of the ruler. He was terribly afraid and approached the owner of the necklace saying, 'Please, do not mention the story of the necklace to the king.' He then brought the necklace to the owner. The man went with the necklace to 'Adud Ad-Dawlah with a smile on face. 'Adud Ad-Dawlah said, 'Wait for me tomorrow in the same place.' 'Adud Ad-Dawlah did indeed come, but this time he brought a gibbet to the front of this crook's shop and commanded that man to be hanged. He remarked, 'Such is the punishment of those whose faith appears in the presence of people and fades when they are alone.⁽¹⁾ As such, Allah places hypocrites in the lowest part of hellfire even though they were the first to rush to prayers and occupied the first row behind the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. However, they contradict themselves and their tongues oppose their hearts.

Ghayb (i.e. the unseen) refers to what is beyond the reach of human perception (*Ya Sin*: 11). Allah informs of the Hereafter, resurrection, gathering and reckoning. This awe of Allah implies the belief in the unseen. We believe in Allah *Glorified is He* even though we cannot see Him. The invisible, unknown, or hidden world is *ghayb*. There is no physical way or preliminary step in the universe to it. For example, in engineering and theoretical exercises, the premises given and preliminary steps take you to conclusions and may help you discover the unknown. You find that the invisible world has two categories:

- The unseen that is exclusive to Allah and only He knows of it, except if He releases to one of His messengers. This category has no preliminary steps leading to or indicative of it.
- Some parts of the unseen have preliminary indicative steps. If you use them, you can reach what was unseen yesterday. You should use the unseen that becomes visible to verify the unseen

(1) Imam ibn Al-Jawzi, *Al-Azkiyas*, chapter 11. This event took place in Baghdad. The merchant who denied the trust was a perfume vendor. The other man was Khurasan. The perfume vendor was punished by hanging by the necklace and was crucified on the door of the shop.

hidden from you. You have no means of sight. What you can see should prompt you to believe in what you do not see. We said that this category of the unseen is the unseen has preliminary steps leading to it. It has a birthdate in which it appears. If this birthdate coincides with some research on the part of man, it appears. If not, Allah may cause it to appear unexpectedly as is the case with many discoveries that now serve human beings. The birthday of the unseen may have come, but your search for it may not.

The believer's faith in the unseen increases when using what is manifest to infer what is hidden. Some gifted scholars explain to you the unseen whose time has not come yet by use of what already exists. For example, it is related ⁽¹⁾ that the Romans asked the Commander of the Believers to send them a scholar to make them understand matters of religion, so he sent Ash-Sha`bi.⁽²⁾ They began asking him about religious matters hidden to them. For example, they asked how man is blessed in paradise by eating without any need to relieve himself. In response, Ash-Sha`bi wonderfully answered that 'have you seen the foetus in the mother's womb; it is fed and grows without relieving itself. If it did relieve itself in the placenta, it would be burned. Likewise, man in paradise eats but does not relieve himself because he is fed by Allah and Allah feeds him in such a way that nothing remains to excrete. Here, we eat our own food and eat much beyond our needs. Thus, we have to excrete'.

They then asked him, 'You have said that you can take from paradise whatever you want without diminishing what is therein at all. How can that be?' He said, 'Because something diminishes when it is consumed if it is not being replenished by something else. If it has replenishment, it does not diminish. The replenishment in paradise is from Allah, so how can there be any diminishing? One more thing: If you went to a lamp and took a flame from it, or even a thousand flames, would you diminish the brightness of the

(1) The story of Ash-Sha`bi with the Roman king and their envy to him

(2) Ibn Hamdun in *Al-Tadhkira Al-Hamduniyyah* states that the man is Khalid ibn Yazid Al-Qurashi. He met with deacons and monks who asked him these questions. Salah Ad-Deen As-Safadi mentions in *Al-Wafi Bil-Wafayat* that the man is Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad Al-Farahidi and the questioner is a monk in a cell. The same was said by Al-Qadi At-Tanukhi in *Nashwar Al-Muhadira*.

lamp at all?' This was Ash-Sha`bi's answer. People were amazed. They wrote a letter for him and he took it to the Commander of the Believers. They envied the Commander of the Believers that he had such an intelligent and gifted person in his service. The letter reads, 'We wonder how could people who have the like of Ash-Sha`bi make someone else their commander?'

When Ash-Sha`bi went and handed over the letter, the Commander of the Believers read it and said to Ash-Sha`bi 'Do you know what is in this letter' He said: 'No, O Commander of the Believers.' He said, 'Read!' So Ash-Sha`bi read the statement and said, 'Yes, O Commander of the Believers, but this is because he did not see you. If they saw you, they will change their opinion.' The one who reflects on the matter of warning will find that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* has two warnings: a general one for all of creation, and it is the warning that is conveyed from Allah to everyone, the believer, and the disbeliever. It is that of which Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Verily, We have sent you with the truth, as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner' (*Fatir*: 24) because those who believe in Allah benefit from being warned, and those who do not believe do not benefit from it at all.

The other warning is that which is specific to the one who fears Allah, whilst alone, and it is the warning for those who have already accepted. The one who fears Allah whilst alone benefits from it because those who do not fear their Lord have already been warned but the warning has been conveyed and they have not benefitted from it. That is why they are not included in the specific warning.

'...unto such, then, give the glad tiding of [Allah's] Forgiveness and of a most excellent reward!' (*Ya Sin*: 11) We said: 'Indeed glad tidings (*bishara*) is to give news of something good before it happens so that one is prompted towards the means of goodness and strives for it. You notice here that forgiveness comes before the reward. Why? This is because the Lord *the Exalted* before giving you a blessing, diverts punishment from you first because something must be emptied before it can be filled. Thus, forgiveness is always the return for believing in Allah, but the reward is the return for acting according to Allah's way. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Verily, Allah does not forgive the ascribing of divinity to aught beside Him, although He

forgives any lesser sin unto whomever He wills...' (*an-Nisa'*: 48). Whoever believes in Allah is safe from punishment and wins forgiveness. Whoever wants the reward must act righteously.

The reward is described as being bountiful (*karim*), even though the Bountiful is the Giver *the Most High*, so the meaning is that the Giver is being bountiful, beyond giving. The giving has become bountiful, as if it is eager for its owner, as a man is eager to give. That is why we have said: 'Indeed, the blessing with which Allah blesses His creation loves its owner and it strives for him and despises anyone who envies him because of it, or resents him because of it'. That is why it does not go to the resentful envier, and he never obtains any good from it.

Evidently, it is as if the Giver of Graces is saying, 'As long as you hate to see others have blessings, then you will never obtain anything from them because you are claiming that Allah is mistaken in His giving and you have exposed yourself to His judgement, so how can His blessings come to you? However, if you love to see others have blessings, then they will come to you and knock on your door'.

This matter has many evidences in our life. I remember one of them, when a man⁽¹⁾ from our town, Mit Ghamr, came to me and complained about how his rich uncle was harsh towards him. Despite his wealth, he was stingy with him. He employed strangers and left him without work among other things he mentioned. My wife was sitting with me. She said to him, 'My son! You are always reviling your uncle and engrossing yourself in his business.' He said, 'Yes, because he never asks about me.'

I said to him: 'I am going to ask you a question and I want you to promise not to lie!' When he saw that I was going to take solemn oath by the Quran, he backed off. I said to him, 'Do you like to see your uncle have blessings?' He said: 'No. How can I like it when I do not get anything from it?' I said: 'If you love for your uncle to have blessings and desire goodness for him, the blessings would come knocking on your door.' He said, 'I implore you to speak to my uncle and advise him regarding me.'

(1) The story of a man with his harsh hearted uncle and the reply of Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawi to him

It appears that the man really tried to reform himself. Allah did rectify what was between him and his uncle. After the dawn prayer, he came to me and knocked on the door. He was crying and said: 'O Sheikh! Let me tell you a story stranger than dreams.' I said, 'What is it?' He said: 'One hour before dawn someone came and knocked on the door really hard. I got up and opened the door. To my surprise, he was my uncle scolding me and saying: 'How can you leave me with strangers who plunder my wealth while you just mess around. Take the keys and in the morning go open the shops and take care of my interests by yourself.'

I said: 'Yes, because you have come to love for your uncle to have blessings and you have changed what was in your heart towards him.' Therefore, whoever wants to possess the blessings of people shall love that others have the blessings also.

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْيِي الْمَوْتِ وَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَدَّمُوا
وَعَائِدُهُمْ وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾

**We shall certainly bring the dead back to life, and We
record what they send ahead of them as well as what they
leave behind: We keep an account of everything in a clear
Record [12] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 12)**

His saying in the previous verse: 'unto such, then, give the glad tiding of [Allah's] Forgiveness and of a most excellent reward' (*Ya Sin*: 11) has a place here because it is appropriate in terms of forgiveness and the excellent reward in the Hereafter, the Lord *the Exalted* tells us about something visible therein: 'Verily, We shall indeed bring the dead back to life' (*Ya Sin*: 12).

- *Inna nahnu*, i.e. 'lit. We, indeed We' (*Ya Sin*: 12) has two first-person pronouns used for exaltation. The syntax rule states that a thing is distinguished when it is common. If it is not, there is no need to distinguish. For example, if someone knocks on your door and you said, 'Who is it?' He says 'Muhammad' and you know many people with this name. So, you ask 'Which Muhammad are you?' He says, 'Muhammad Ahmad' but again you know

many people who share this name. You ask, ‘Muhammad Ahmad who?’ He says, ‘Muhammad Ahmad Mahmud.’ At that point, you know him because the first and second names are very common.

- When the Lord *the Exalted* says, *Inna nahnu*, i.e. ‘verily We’ (*Ya Sin*: 12), i.e. there is no one else; it is as if He is saying ‘Indeed We, indeed We’: ‘There is no one other than Me and no one is equal to Me. We explained that when Allah speaks about Himself, it may be in the form of the plural, e.g., ‘Behold, from above We have bestowed this [divine book] on the Night of Destiny’ (*al-Qadr*: 1). Allah also says, ‘Behold, it is We Ourselves who have bestowed from above, step by step, this reminder. Behold, it is We who shall truly guard it [from all corruption]’ (*al-Hijr*: 9).

You notice that the pronoun here is for exaltation. This is the case in all verses that speak of the Divine Actions and Blessings. Each of His Actions requires many attributes such as Knowledge, Wisdom, Power, and so forth. All these attributes are embedded in ‘We’ as embodiment of perfection and exalted beautiful names. When Allah *Glorified is He* talks about His unique essence, the first-person singular pronoun is used; e.g., ‘Verily, I – I alone – am Allah’ (*Ta Ha*: 14). He does not say, for example, ‘Verily We, We are Allah’ because ‘verily we’ and ‘we’ indicate plurality, while the speech is about oneness, so it must be in the singular form. That is why the Lord *the Exalted* stresses this oneness in a number of ways when Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Verily, I – I alone – am Allah; there is no deity save Me. Hence, worship Me alone, and be constant in prayer, so as to remember Me!’ (*Ta Ha*: 14)

Allah *Glorified is He* did not say, ‘Worship Us and establish the prayer for Our remembrance’ but rather, ‘Hence, worship Me alone, and be constant in prayer, so as to remember Me!’ (*Ta Ha*: 14) This is because worship is for Allah alone. The process of resurrection and bringing the dead back to life belongs to Allah alone and no one else. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Verily, We shall indeed bring the dead back to life’ (*Ya Sin*: 12), before ‘We shall record whatever [deeds] they have sent ahead, and the traces [of good and evil] which they have left behind’ (*Ya Sin*: 12) even though recording comes before the revival of the dead.

Recording takes place in this world, while bringing the dead back to life is in the Hereafter. Why is this? First, you must bear in mind that this speech is not our speech. It is Allah's Speech. Use your intellect to understand what Allah means. The Lord's style is composed of words that befit His Perfection, while your speech is composed of what suits your perfection. We said before that the Quran has certain qualities that distinguish it from other books. You treat it in a way that you would not treat any other book. You must read it in a state of purity after doing ablution. Whilst reading it, you should observe the places of articulation as well as the rules and etiquettes of recitation.

It also has another distinctive feature in its articulation. It is distinct in writing. For example, the word *ism* is written with an *alif* as in:

- 'Hallowed be your Lord's name (*ismu rabbika*), full of Majesty and Glory!' (*ar-Rahman*: 78)
- 'Extol the Limitless Glory of your Lord's name (*ismu rabbika*): [the Glory of] The All-Highest' (*al-A'la*: 1).

However, in the *basmala* (in the Name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful) at the beginning of the Quranic chapters, it is written without the *alif*. We have *bismilahi irahman-iraheem*. We say, do we write the Quran according to the human rules of dictation? No, because it is divinely written.

What is the wisdom behind 'Verily, We shall indeed bring the dead back to life' (*Ya Sin*: 12) coming before 'We shall record whatever [deeds] they have sent ahead, and the traces [of good and evil] which they have left behind' (*Ya Sin*: 12)?

What is the benefit of recording? Recording the deeds is for the sake of rewards and punishments. If there is no revival of the dead or reckoning and return, then what is the point of recording? Why bringing the dead back to life comes before recording the deeds? Bringing the dead back to life is greater than recording, so it is befitting to come first.

'Whatever [deeds] they have sent ahead' (*Ya Sin*: 12): The deeds may be profitable beyond death such as the on-going charity. For example, if a man digs a well and people drink from it after he dies. Another example is a person who leaves behind beneficial knowledge. These good deeds are written down

before. His words ‘the traces [of good and evil] which they have left behind’ (*Ya Sin*: 12) refer to these deeds.

The traces of practices left behind. They follow it after death, be they good or evil. They are recorded in a book inclusive of all deeds, minor or major, after the person dies. For example, if a person writes down an unjust bequest which denies someone his due right, the one who inherits his estate carries all the consequences that result from this injustice. This is because he has not just deprived the direct inheritor, but he has also denied his descendants who would have benefited from this estate. That is why its sin remains with him until the Day of Resurrection.

The same goes for whoever introduces a tyrannical law for people. This person bears the sin of this tyrannical law that he imposed. The sin is borne by whoever judges according to this law after him. An example of this would be the issue of the public sector introduced by whoever introduced it, and then its traces caused such tribulation amongst the people that they all protested and the rulers themselves asked to amend it.

This issue clarifies for us the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘Whoever introduces a good practice has the reward of it and the reward of whoever does it until the Day of Resurrection. Yet, whoever introduces an evil practice has its sin and the sin of whoever does it until the Day of Resurrection.’⁽¹⁾

Have you seen an old man planting a date palm whose fruits might not benefit him, but those after him will? These will be his traces left after him and Allah writes them for him and credits them to his account. Some scholars say that the meaning of ‘We shall record whatever [deeds] they have sent ahead, and the traces [of good and evil] which they have left behind’ (*Ya Sin*: 12) is ‘We write down the intention that precedes the action and the action itself, which is the trace of this intention’. When you intend to do a good deed, you get the reward of the intention and if you do it, you get the reward of the deed.

(1) Ahmad, *Musnad*, 4/361-362; Muslim, *Sahih*, (Hadith: 1017); Ibn Majah, *Sunnan*, (*Hadith*: 207); and At-Tirmidhi, *Sunnan*, (*Hadith*: 2675) from Jarir ibn 'Abdullah Al-Bajli. At-Tirmidhi said, ‘It is a good and authentic Hadith.’

This clarifies the Noble Hadith: 'Whoever intends a good deed but does not do it has a reward written in his favour. Whoever intends it and then does it has ten rewards written in his favour.'⁽¹⁾ This shows us the importance of making an intention before commencing an action so that man can be rewarded for it. The believer does not perform actions aimlessly.

For '...of all things do We take account in a record clear' (*Ya Sin*: 12). There is a difference between writing and counting. Writing means that you write something, but you do not join everything that has been written, so you need someone to count it and calculate it. The Lord *the Exalted* records all our deeds by writing them first and then counts and calculates them, and the counting and the calculating are also in a recorded book that contains everything '... in a record clear' (*Ya Sin*: 12). The record (*imam*) is that which leads, and what is meant here is the Preserved Tablet from which the angels take their duties regarding the running of the universe. The Lord *the Exalted* then says:

وَأَضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلًا أَصْحَابَ الْقَرْيَةِ إِذْ جَاءَهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا
إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَيْكُم مُّرْسَلُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

**Give them the example of the people to whose town
messengers came [13] We sent two messengers but they
rejected both. Then We reinforced them with a third[14]
(The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 13 - 14)**

First, notice that this verse is the one that will explain to us how '*Ya Sin*' is the 'heart' of the Quran. Allah says, 'Set forth unto them a parable' (*Ya Sin*: 13). The word *darab* (strike) refers to the bodily contact with another body with force such that striking body affects the body struck and causes pain. The one striking must be stronger than the one being struck. If they are equal or the one struck is stronger, the act is futile and fruitless. Note the words of Ar-Rafi'i⁽²⁾ addressing the one who mocks the Divine Power:

(1) *Muslim, Sahih, (Hadith: 206), Book of Faith from Abu Hurayra; Al-Bukhari, Sahih, in different wordings (Hadith: 6491) from Ibn `Abbas.*

(2) Mustafa Sadiq `Abd Ar-Razzaq Ar-Rafi'i is a scholar of literature and poetry; he is a great writer. His forefathers are from Tripoli in Lebanon, but he was born in Bahteem=

O you who mocks the decrees, it is your soul that you mock, not the decrees

O you who strike a rock with a stick, do you strike the stick or the rock

The *dareeb* means some who is similar to another. If two people dispute something, mention to them a similitude for explanation and say, ‘this likes that.’ The noblest similitude in the Quran is the one that Allah gives to explain His illumination of the universe, not His own light as some people think. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is, as it were, that of a niche containing a lamp; the lamp is [enclosed] in glass, the glass [shining] like a radiant star: [a lamp] lit from a blessed tree – an olive-tree that is neither of the east nor of the west – the oil whereof [is so bright that it] would well-nigh give light [of itself] even though fire had not touched it: light upon light’ (*an-Nur*: 35).

This is a similitude of Allah’s enlightening of the universe. It is not a similitude of Allah’s Light. Allah’s Light is perfect and unrestricted. It bears no resemblance to the light in this world, which is also dependant on His Light. Evidence is found in the fact that on the Day of Resurrection there will not be any shining sun or radiating moon. There only ‘The earth will shine bright with her Lord’s Light’ (*az-Zumar*: 69). Allah says, ‘Will know therein neither [burning] sun nor cold severe’ (*al-Insan*: 13).

We live in this world with the means that Allah has created. However, in the Hereafter we will live by direct means from the One Who creates all means. In the life of this world, Allah gives you an intellect to think, limbs to act, earth to produce vegetation, and water for irrigation. These means are divinely given to help human life. Man may think that human life belongs to this world and may suffer delusions on account of the Divine Graces. Allah makes these means insufficient at times and they become scarce so that we turn back to Him. He says to us, ‘Do not be deluded by the means and do not be heedless of the One Who creates the means.

When the means are insufficient, people suffer drought and famine that may persist until people and animals are on the brink of annihilation. The

= in the house of his mother’s father in 1881 C.E. He died in Tanta in 1937 at the age of 56. He wrote treatises in literature and politics. He has three-volume book of poetry. His books include *Wahi Al-Qalam* and *Al-Ma`raka*, which was a refutation of Taha Husain.

drought prayer is legislated for people to rush back to Allah along with their women, children, and even animals. They even change their clothes and attire to draw closer to Allah imploring Him for rains. Allah sometimes makes the means insufficient to remind us of Him and teach us that this matter is not mechanical. Behind the means of this matter is the Creator of means who can hold them back.

Again, human limbs are divinely subjugated to human will. Man may even be deluded by them and think that he owns them and that they are subject to his instruction. The reality is that they are a gift from Allah and if He so wills, he can leave them or strip them, e.g. cutting the electric current between the brain and the limbs. The hand thus drops and it does not move. One tries to raise it, but he cannot. For example, we see America distributing aids to countries around the world. It is the most advanced and prosperous country. However, it experiences sudden natural disasters, such as floods in which water covers houses. Likewise, Japan is an earthquake-prone country. The Japanese know it and say: 'Our country is a land of earthquakes'. They take all necessary steps and precautions. However, massive and destructive earthquakes afflict them, such as what happened in Hokkaido. All these precautions and preparations were of little benefit.

The Lord *the Exalted* makes these matters insufficient so that we do not become deluded by the means and forget the Creator of means. Allah speaks the truth when He says, 'Nay, verily, man becomes grossly overweening whenever he believes himself to be self-sufficient' (*al-'Alaq:* 6-7). The Lord *the Exalted* teaches us how to call Him and how to seek refuge in Him alone when our means are scarce. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Yet when the misfortune decreed by Us befell them, they did not humble themselves' (*al-An'am:* 43). Allah teaches us how to endear Him to us when we say, 'O Allah! Relieve us from the state we are in!'

Giving examples is part of the rhetorical style of Arabic. It is used to clarify matters and make them convincing. The noblest example that the Lord *the Exalted* gives is that of His enlightening as said. Simply, Allah's Light has no likeness. His saying 'The parable of His Light is' (*an-Nur:* 35), i.e. His enlightening 'as it were, that of a niche' (*an-Nur:* 35). Many people think that

mishkah (the niche) is the lamp, but *mishkah* is the window located on a wall. It is an expression referring to a window that is open from one side and it is called a niche as found in farmers' houses built with unburned bricks. This niche acts upon all the light such that it is not scattered here and there.

This *mishkah*: 'containing a lamp; the lamp is [enclosed] in glass, the glass [shining] like a radiant star [a lamp] lit from a blessed tree – an olive-tree that is neither of the east nor of the west – the oil whereof [is so bright that it] would well-nigh give light [of itself] even though fire had not touched it' (*an-Nur*: 35).

It is for you to contemplate how distinct this light is that it issues forth from the *mishkah* (niche) that gathers the radiance. There is also the lamp, which is in a glass that sifts its radiance and purifies it such that no smoke emanates from it. The glass only allows as much air as the lamp needs. Like a twinkling star, this glass is self-radiant.

Then this lamp is fuelled by oil that is of the finest quality, which is olive oil. This olive is not of the East, such that it is hot, and it is not from the West, such that it is cold. It is balanced in its constitution and purity, such that its oil radiates even if it isn't touched by fire.

Therefore, it is from its own qualities that it almost radiates itself, and that is why the similitude is completed by His saying: 'Light upon light' (*an-Nur*: 35). Allah, therefore, illuminates this vast universe just as this lamp illuminates this tiny niche.

But why does Allah *Glorified is He* use this similitude as an example? They reply it is because when Allah created man and enabled him to walk the paths of life, he needed a physical light to guide his physical movement and a spiritual light to guide his spiritual movement. We take physical light from the sun during the day and from the moon during the night. If we did not have access to this light, we could manufacture it, and everyone uses what he can afford of means of sustenance. Someone might light his way with a candle, while someone else might use a number five lamp, whereas others will use neon and fluorescent lamps, for example. Thus, if Allah's light, the sun, shined upon earth, spreading its rays everywhere, people would give up using their artificial means of light for His endless natural source. Everyone then becomes equal in basking in His radiance.

As long as Allah's Light is manifest, no one has the ability to shed it except for Him. The same goes for our attitude towards Allah's divine orders. Allah *Glorified is He* teaches us that we cannot comply with any other than Him. This command is evident in the following verse where Allah says, 'Light upon light. Allah guides to His Light whom He wills' (*an-Nur*: 35).

Every example has a place in which it is given, in which it is appropriate to be said. Accordingly, when one of them saw a poet being very exhaustive in praising that which he praised, he said, 'Indeed he is miserly, for he needs all of this praise in order to feel tenderness towards the one praising him so that he would give him what he is asking for!' And he said regarding this:⁽¹⁾

If a person praises another person for his favour
And he is exhaustive in it then he has prolonged his ridiculing
Had he not been able to do so because of the depth of the well
From which he drinks, he would not have elongated his well rope.⁽²⁾

This is because the depth of the water level in a well necessitates a long rope, and this is the well rope that has a bucket attached to it.

One of the examples in the Noble Quran that clarifies the issue of associating partners with Allah is when He *Glorified is He* says, 'Allah presents an example: a slave owned by quarrelling partners and another belonging exclusively to one man - are they equal in comparison?' (*az-Zumar*: 29)

This means when they are astonished that they are being called to Allah's Oneness, and they differ in this matter, give them this example, and encompass them with it. In other words, how can you be astonished by worshiping Allah alone, Who has no partner, when in your daily lives, you have a live example of this? Do you consider a slave with more than one

(1) He is Abu Al-Hasan Ali ibn Abbas ibn Jurayj, also known as Ibn Ar-Rumi, of European origin. He was born in Baghdad in the year 221 A.H. and grew up there and died there due to poisoning. Al-Marzibani said, 'I do not know any ruler or subordinate that he praised except that he went back to him and ridiculed him and this was a cause of his death.'

(2) These two verses are from a poem written by Ibn Ar-Rumi from the *Kamil Metre*. It consists of four verses, beginning with:
Every person who praises another person for his favour
And he is exhaustive in it, seeks to ridicule him.

master controlling him equal to another who has only one master? ‘Are they equal in comparison?’ (*az-Zumar*: 29)

Likewise, when you worship other than Allah, how can you go and worship various gods and abandon the One True Lord? Therefore, the True Lord conveys this example to the disbelievers so that this matter which their intellects cannot comprehend is made clear for them.

In our literature, an Arabic proverb always has a story behind it and a place where it is said; the event in which the proverb was first said and an event that resembles the original one. It is as if the original event leads to a firm truth that we must preserve and repeat in a situation that resembles it. For example, when you see a student neglecting his studies throughout the year and right before the exam’s time he starts revising his lessons, at this point you can say: ‘Before you are hit by a misfortune, prepare for it’.⁽¹⁾ This proverb can be said to someone who does not prepare for something before it happens.

If a man challenges you, for example, and he claims that he is stronger than you then you can say, ‘If you are a wind then you have met a hurricane’.⁽²⁾

A proverb is said just as it is without alteration. For example, if you sent a male messenger to bring you some news, on his return you would ask him, ‘What did you bring of news, ‘Isam?’⁽³⁾ The proverb must remain in the singular feminine form because when it was first said it was said to a woman whose name was ‘Isam. We have to maintain its original wording without changing

(1) This proverb is said in preparation for disasters before they descend. It has been mentioned by Abu Hilal Al-‘Askari in *Jamhara Al-Amthal* and Al-Maydani in *Majma’ Al-Amthal* and Ibn ‘Abd Rabih in *Al-Iqd Al-Farid Kitab Al-Jawhara Fi Al-Amthal*.

(2) This means you have met someone stronger than you. This has been mentioned by Abu Manşur Ath-Tha‘alabi in his book *At-Tamthil Wa Al-Muhadara* and Az-Zamakhshari in *Al-Mustaqsa Fi Amthal Al-‘Arab*.

(3) Abu ‘Abid said: ‘One of their parables when they ask questions is: ‘What did you bring of news, ‘Isam?’ It is said that the speaker is An-Nabigha Adh-Dhubyani and he said it to ‘Isam ibn Shahir Al-Jarmi, the chamberlain of An-Nu‘man, when he was sick. An-Nabigha asked ‘Isam about An-Nu‘man. This has been mentioned by Abu ‘Abid ibn Salam in *Al-Amthal*. Abu Hilal Al-‘Askari mentioned in *Jamhara Al-Amthal* that ‘Isam was a woman that was sent by Al-Harith ibn ‘Amr Al-Kindi to the daughter of ‘Awf Al-Kindi. When she came back to him, he said to her, ‘What did you bring of news, ‘Isam?’ and she described her to him.

it, so we should not say, 'What did you two bring of news?' or 'What did you all bring of news?' That is how it should be said, short and light on the tongue.

Another proverb is said when someone is suddenly confronted with a punishment that has been prepared for him, 'A camel may break wind when the hot iron is on the fire'⁽¹⁾. When a camel sees hot iron, it immediately learns that it is going to be branded with it. This is an observed method for treating mange⁽²⁾ amongst the Arabs. When a camel sees it, its stomach starts rumbling, such that it breaks wind and has diarrhoea.

Allah *Glorified is He* sets an example for those who oppose Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the following verse when he says: 'And present to them an example: the people of the city, when the messengers came to it' (*Ya Sin*: 13). In other words, Allah addresses his Prophet by telling him to narrate to those who disbelieve in him, deny him, stubbornly oppose, and harm him the parable of the people of the city. It was said that the city referred to in this verse was Antioch, a town in the district of *Iskenderun* (The Sanjak of Alexandretta) in Turkey. Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* sent two messengers to the town so that its people would be guided. When they went, the people denied them, so 'Isa (Jesus) *peace and blessings be upon him* supported and strengthened them by sending a third one for their aid. However, this only increased their rejection and opposition. To their relief, amongst the people came a man who heard from them and instantly believed in what they brought from guidance. When he heard that the people wanted to punish these messengers, he rushed to stand in the position of truth alongside the messengers and against the people of the city.

The meaning of, '... when the messengers came to it' (*Ya Sin*: 13) is messengers from Allah because 'Isa's (Jesus's) sending them is part of Allah's decree. And in the following verse, 'When We sent to them two but they denied them,

(1) This has been mentioned by 'Abd Al Qadir Al-Baghdadi in *Khizanat Al-Adab Wa Lub Lubab Lissan Al-'Arab*.

(2) An infectious disease in animals that have hair, such as dogs and cats that makes hair fall out and causes areas of rough skin. This has been mentioned by Ibn Qutayba Al-Dinawari in *Adab Al-Katib*. Al-Jahiz mentioned in his *Kitab Al-Hayawan* (Book of Animals), that the Arabs used to brand their afflicted animals with hot iron, but they ended up harming the healthy before curing the diseased.

so we strengthened them with a third, and they said, “Indeed, we are messengers to you.” (*Ya Sin*: 14), Allah *Glorified is He* reinforced him with them. In other words, He reinforced the truth that they were carrying, so sending the third was not just to assist the first two themselves but also to affirm the truth. The evidence is that Allah did not say, ‘We strengthened the two’ and this is part of the Quran’s subtlety and rhetoric. If the truth were on the tongue of other than these two, we would also assist it. Therefore, the expression here is not for individuals but for the truth that they have come with.

Similarly, in the story of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* Allah says, ‘We will strengthen your arm through your brother’ (*Fatir*: 28). It is as if Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* came to strengthen Musa (Moses) himself and not the truth that he was sent with as in the previous story. This is because there is a difference between the two situations. Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* is the one who asked his Lord to strengthen his arm, and for this he chose his brother Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* so Musa (Moses), the chosen one, is admitting that he needs help and he asks for help and assistance by way of his brother. He loves the truth and wants it to be supported, even if this support came from other than him.

We have already said that speech is the mediation between the speaker and the one being addressed. The speaker conveys his thoughts and desires to the one being addressed and if the one being addressed is unfamiliar with the matter the speech is conveyed to him without any emphasis. If the subject matter is familiar to him and he has doubt about it, or he rejects it and denies it, then you must emphasise what you are saying to the degree that is necessary for the matter to be accepted. If he is merely doubtful, then one tool of emphasis should suffice. However, if he is rejecting the matter altogether, then you will need more tools of emphasis, as Allah, says, ‘Indeed, we are messengers to you’ (*Ya Sin*: 14).

The first two messengers had to say to the people, ‘We are messengers that have been sent to you on behalf of `Isa (Jesus)’, but the people still rejected. When the third came, they had to make their speech more emphatic, and so they said, ‘Indeed, we are messengers to you’ (*Ya Sin*: 14); they emphasised their speech with more than one tool of emphasis, and despite this they denied again.

قَالُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا وَمَا أَنْزَلَ الرَّحْمَنُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا تَكْذِبُونَ ﴿١٥﴾
 قَالُوا رَبُّنَا يَعْلَمُ إِنَّا إِلَيْكُمْ لَمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَمَا عَلَيْنَا إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٧﴾

They said, ‘Truly, we are messengers to you’ [15] But they answered, ‘You are only men like ourselves. The Lord of Mercy has sent nothing; you are just lying.’ They said, ‘Our Lord knows that we have been sent to you [16] Our duty is only to deliver the message to you [17] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 15 - 17)

When they denied and rejected for the second time, they had to emphasise their speech in the following way: ‘Our Lord knows that we are messengers to you’ (*Ya Sin*: 16). Every word in this expression has some emphasis. Firstly, there is *inna* (indeed). Then, there is the method of restriction which is to put the preposition and the object of the preposition at the beginning of the sentence. After that, there is the letter *lam* (l) - preceding the words ‘messengers to you’ - for emphasis. The emphasis, therefore, corresponds to the degree of rejection and these people denied the message from several angles beginning with: ‘They said, “You are not but human beings like us”’ (*Ya Sin*: 15), followed by: ‘and the Most Merciful has not revealed a thing (*Ya Sin*: 15), and then: ‘You are only telling lies’ (*Ya Sin*: 15).

In their saying, ‘You are only telling lies’ (*Ya Sin*: 15), they are assuming that the messengers being human beings is a flaw in the divine message. But how could the message be realised if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were not a human being?

Similarly, elsewhere in another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* discusses this matter with them, where He says, ‘And what prevented the people from believing when guidance came to them except that they said, “Has Allah sent a human messenger?” Say, “If there were upon the earth angels walking securely, We would have sent down to them from the heaven an angel [as a] messenger”’ (*al-Isra*: 94-95). This is the first supporting argument as proof to their refutation; those who walk on earth are human beings, not angels.

Furthermore, Allah *Glorified is He* demonstrates to us why He chose to send a human being with His message instead of an angel, when He says, ‘And if We had made him an angel, We would have made him [appear as] a

man, and We would have covered them with that in which they cover themselves' (*al-An'am*: 9). If it were otherwise, how would you see him? How would you learn from him if he were in his angelic form? Therefore, a messenger must be of the same species as those to whom he is being sent so that he can set an example for them. How can an angelic messenger be an example when he cannot disobey Allah by his very nature? The messenger is responsible for conveying Allah's Message and implementing it within himself. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'There has certainly been for you, in the Messenger of Allah an excellent example' (*al-Ahzab*: 21) which means that he implements the way that he has come with before conveying it to the people.

Their saying, 'You are not but human beings like us, and the Most Merciful has not revealed a thing. You are only telling lies' (*Ya Sin*: 15) indicate their foolishness in truly comprehending what their prophet has come with. It is astonishing how they recognize Allah having the attribute of Mercy, but at the same time they do not believe in Him. It is one of the requirements of this mercy that He sends them a messenger to show them the right path by following what is good for them, and protects them from evil by staying away from what is harmful for them. They, therefore, acknowledge the aspect that convicts them, and then they go further and accuse the messengers of lying, 'You are only telling lies' (*Ya Sin*: 15).

When the messengers emphasise their message, they say, 'Our Lord knows that we are messengers to you' (*Ya Sin*: 16); it is in the place of an oath because they are calling on Allah as a witness to the veracity of their message. When Arabs use an oath in their statements it is to affirm something upon which it is refuted. As long as the messengers have said, 'Our Lord knows' (*Ya Sin*: 16), then the matter is either true or not true. If it is not true, then they have lied about Allah.

The Arabs believed that an unequivocal lie is enough reason to bring about the destruction of houses. And there is a Hadith which indicates that lying turns houses into a wasteland, (*balaqi*)⁽¹⁾. He was asked, 'Does the believer steal?' He

(1) *Balaqi* which is the plural of *balqa*... It is impoverished land that does not grow anything. Al-Bayhaqi narrated in *As-Sunnan Al-Kubra*, in the book of Faith, in the chapter on ominous oaths, Hadith no. 19655 from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* that Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'There is=

said, 'Yes'. 'Does the believer fornicate?' He said, 'Yes.' 'Does the believer lie?' He said, 'No.'⁽¹⁾

Lying is, henceforth, a foul trait and prohibited, even amongst those who do not belong to a religion. That is why the disbelievers of Mecca did not utter the words of Allah's Oneness (There is no deity worthy of worship but Allah) and had they thought that it was merely a phrase that was said, without any reference to His Oneness, they would have said it. However, they knew what it referred to and what it meant. They knew it meant that worship is for none other than Allah; any command for or against something is from Him only and there is no sovereignty for none other than Him. That is why they refused to say it because they knew to what it referred.

These disbelievers, in their denial of the messengers, believed that by doing so they were being protective of Allah and that they were going to seek revenge from the messengers who were lying about Him. The following verse continues:

قَالُوا إِنَّا تَطَيَّرْنَا بِكُمْ لَئِن لَّمْ تَنْتَهُوا لَنَرْجُمَنَّكُمْ وَلَيَمَسَّنَّكُم مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾

**But they answered, 'We think you are an evil omen.
If you do not stop, we shall stone you, and inflict a
painful torment on you' [18] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 18)**

It is as if they were saying to the messengers, 'As long as you have lied about Allah and said, "Our Lord knows" (*Ya Sin*: 16) in matters in which we think you are lying, then we augur evil from you'. In other words, 'we see you as an evil omen'. *Tatayyur* (to augur evil) comes from the word *tira* (an evil omen). This was something known amongst the Arabs. When one of them wanted to do something, he would approach a bird and drive it away, and then see the

= nothing in which I obey Allah that is swifter in reward than keeping the ties of kinship, and there is nothing swifter in retribution than injustice and cutting the ties of kinship and a false oath turns the houses into wasteland.'

(1) Mentioned with this wording by Al-Mutaqi Al-Hindi in *Muntakhab Al-Kanz* (1/215) on the margin of Ahmad's *Musnad*, from the Hadith of 'Abdullah ibn Jarad and he attributed it to Ibn 'Asakir...He also relates that Abu Darda' asked the Prophet Muhammad, 'O Messenger of Allah! Does the believer lie?' He said, 'The one who lies when he speaks does not believe in Allah and the Last Day.' He attributed it to Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadī in *Al-Muttafaq*.

direction of its flight. If it flew towards the right, he would carry out what he had intended. If the bird flew to the left, he would see it as an evil omen and refrain from it. Islam has declared this practice unlawful and prohibited.

Their saying, 'If you do not desist' (*Ya Sin*: 18) - from saying that you have been sent with a message- 'we will surely stone you, and there will surely touch you, from us, a painful punishment.' (*Ya Sin*: 18) In doing so, they have gathered to stone them and give them a grievous punishment. Note that the acts of stoning and incurring punishment differ in nature. Stoning is not a punishment. It is to throw stones until death, so it is the ceasing of punishment, whereas, a punishment is to cause pain to a living being; similarly, someone who has died cannot be punished. That is why the Arabs said, 'It does not harm a sheep to be skinned after it has been slaughtered'.

That is why, when one of the judges claimed that there was no text in the Quran that indicates stoning, we replied that this is true. There is no verse in the Quran that clearly mentions stoning, but which of the two is stronger in legislation, speech, or action? Which of the two is considered a proof? There is no doubt that action is the stronger proof because speech can be interpreted into different meanings. Action, on the other hand, is not open to interpretation, and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did resort to stoning in the case of Ma'iz and Al-Ghamidiyah.

Therefore, the justification here is not based on a spoken text but rather on an action of Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* whom Allah authorised to legislate and commanded us to obey. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from' (*al-Hashr*: 7). Allah *Glorified is He* would not have enjoined this upon us unless He had left some matters for His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to legislate.

This is one of his distinct qualities that distinguish him from other messengers, as each one of them only had to convey the ruling as it had been ordained by Allah. As for the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* he was commanded to convey some matters from Allah, while others were left for him in which he was authorised to legislate. That is why the following verse

was revealed: 'And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from' (*al-Hashr*: 7).

Furthermore, when you examine the verses of obedience, you will find that the Quran says at one time: 'And obey Allah and obey the Messenger' (*al-Ma'ida*: 92). In another verse, Allah says, 'and obey Allah and the Messenger' (*Al-Imran*: 132). He also says, '... and obey the Messenger' (*an-Nisa*': 59). The repetition of the verb 'obey' indicates that the aspect is split into two; Allah *Glorified is He* has a command and the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* has a command, i.e. obey Allah in the legislation that is general and comprehensive and obey the Messenger in the specifics of that which is general. For example, we have the general command to perform *zakat* (obligatory charity), but Allah *Glorified is He* did not determine the minimum amount at which wealth becomes taxable. This minimum amount was clarified by the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* so Allah has a command in this and the Messenger has another.

On the other hand, if the command to obey is only mentioned once and the Messenger of Allah is mentioned in addition to Allah by way of a conjunction, also the command to obey is not repeated for whomever it is to be obeyed, then you should know that the command is one; Allah said it and the Messenger of Allah said it. Obedience to the latter is thus considered part of the obedience to the first. When Allah says, 'O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you' (*an-Nisa*': 59), he did not say, 'Obey those in authority among you' because obedience to those in authority is included in obedience to Allah and obedience to the Messenger of Allah. They do not have a separate independent obedience, but rather obedience to them is in the shadow of obedience to Allah and obedience His Messenger.

Therefore, to base one's proof on action is stronger than that which is based on words, so if someone said, 'We want to hear what Allah has said regarding this matter', we would reply, 'Yes, there is speech in the form of a text and speech in the form of an action'. When Allah *Glorified is He* talks about female slaves in this matter, He says, '...if they should commit adultery, then for them is half the punishment for free [unmarried] women' (*an-Nisa*': 25).

Punishment is as we have previously mentioned is to cause pain to a living being, whereas stoning is the ceasing of punishment. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* has clarified that the half refers to the punishment, and this excludes stoning because stoning cannot be halved. Therefore, the command to halve is not absolute, but rather is specific to punishment. This means that they can be stoned too in a complete sense, not in half.

Similarly, in the story of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and the hoopoe where Allah says, '[If so,] I will punish him most severely or will kill him' (*an-Naml*: 21). Therefore, punishment is not slaughter and is not killing.

With regards to what the disbelievers said in the following verse, 'we will surely stone you' (*Ya Sin*: 18), *rajm* (stoning) could refer to verbal abuse. It could also mean stoning in its literal sense, either with severe stoning until death or clemency. What is intended is the infliction of pain.

﴿١٩﴾ قَالُوا طَائِرُكُمْ مَعَكُمْ أَإِنْ ذُكِّرْتُمْ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ

The messengers said, 'The evil omen is within yourselves.

Why do you take it as an evil omen when you are reminded of the Truth? You are going too far!' [19]

(The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 19)

The meaning of 'your evil omen' (*Ya Sin*: 19) is your pessimism and 'is with yourselves' (*Ya Sin*: 19), i.e. it is attached to you. What is meant here is disbelief. The first *hamzah*⁽¹⁾ in 'Is it because you were reminded?' (*Ya Sin*: 19), is for asking a question and *in* (if) is introducing a conditional clause whose resultant clause is elided, which means, 'Is it the case that if you are reminded of Allah and the way of your Creator, and of what pleases you in your life of this world, the result is that you threaten the one who reminds you with stoning and grievous suffering, instead of being pleased with him and helping him and following what he has brought to you'?!'

(1) *Hamzah* is a letter in the Arabic alphabet, representing the glottal stop [ʔ]. *Hamzah* is not one of the 28 'full' letters, and owes its existence to historical inconsistencies in the standard writing system.

‘Nay, but ye are a people transgressing all bounds!’ (*Ya Sin*: 19); in other words, people who transgress the bounds because the matter between you and us, the messengers, has not been other than a spoken exchange; we have not transgressed the bounds of rhetoric by saying more than that we are messengers that have been sent to you. And the result was that you have responded to this spoken exchange with harsh and excessive action that oversteps the bounds such that you have gathered against us for the purpose of stoning and a grievous suffering. Allah *the Exalted* continues their story:

وَجَاءَ مِنْ أَقْصَا الْمَدِينَةِ رَجُلٌ يَسْعَى قَالَ يَنْقَوْمُوا اتَّبِعُوا الْمُرْسَلِينَ
 اتَّبِعُوا مَنْ لَا يَسْأَلُكُمْ أَجْرًا وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ
 وَمَا لِيَ لَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

Then, from the furthest part of the city, a man came running. He said, ‘My people, follow the messengers [20] Follow them: they are not asking you to reward them and they are rightly guided [21] Why should I not worship the One who created me? It is to Him that you will be returned [22] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 20 - 22)

When Allah *Glorified is He* tells us ‘And there came from the farthest end of the city a man, running. He said, “O my people, follow the messengers”’ (*Ya Sin*: 20), it indicates that the first two messengers whom the people had denied had supporters who believed in them and verified the truth of their call. When the third one came and the people denied him as well, the believers wanted to defend the truth with all their power, and amongst them was this man who had come from the farthest end of the city striving to give victory to the truth and exalt its word. It has been said that his name was Habib An-Najjar.⁽¹⁾

(1) *Al-Qurtubi* said, ‘He is Habib ibn Mara and he was a carpenter.’ It is also said that he was a shoemaker and others say he was a dyer. *Ibn `Abbas*, *Mujahid* and *Muqatil* said, ‘He is Habib ibn Isra’il An-Najjar and he used to sculpture idols.’ *Wahb* said, ‘Habib was a leper and his house was by the farthest gate of all the gates of the city. He was devoted to the worship of idols and for seventy years he supplicated to them so that perhaps they would show him mercy and relieve him of harm, but they did not respond=

The first thing you notice in this verse is when Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...from the farthest end of the city’ (*Ya Sin*: 20) that he was not close to where this debate was taking place, so he underwent difficulty for the sake of giving victory to the truth. This is an evidence of this man’s strong faith and that the previous two messengers had conveyed their message to the farthest end of the city. Allah *Glorified is He* distinctly refers to him as being a ‘man’, and not as someone. He mentioned the attribute that is obvious in his creation, being a man.

What identifies a man of being manly is how he perceives the world around him. For example, a man who wants life for himself only and wants everyone to serve him sees everything for himself and does not see himself for anyone. This man’s homeland is his ego and his self. A man whose homeland is his family and his dependants work on benefitting them, and a man whose homeland is the entire world is like the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* as he is the quintessence of what it means to be a man.

Therefore, how men perceive the world around them is what determines their homelands and their stations, and the highest of these stations is a man whose homeland is the entire world because all of creation is dependent on Allah. Whoever loves goodness for them and works for what benefits them has indeed been entrusted by Allah to provide for the slaves.

To clarify this, imagine if you have children, and one of them uses his pocket money to fulfil his own pleasures and desires which are of no benefit, while the other uses his pocket money to buy sweets which he would distribute among his younger siblings. Which one of them would you prefer after that? Which one of them to whom would you give more? The same goes for the hand that takes from Allah and serves His creation. It is as if Allah is saying

= to him. When he saw the messengers calling him to worship Allah, he asked, ‘Do you have a sign?’ They said, ‘We will supplicate our Lord, the Fully Capable, and He will relieve you from whatever you are in.’ He said, ‘Indeed this is amazing to me. I have been supplicating to these gods for seventy years to relieve me and they have not been able to. How can your Lord relieve someone in one morning?’ They said, ‘Yes, our Lord is fully capable to do whatever He wills, whereas these gods can not benefit or harm anything.’ He then believed and they supplicated to their Lord and Allah relieved him of what he suffered. It was as if he had never been in any hardship. *Tafsir Al-Qurtubi* (8/5653)

to him: 'You have been entrusted with My blessing, and entrusted with My creation'. In this regard, a poet once said,

Indeed I am a person, my dirhams (money) do not settle

In the hand except rarely, as if they were a passer-by'

Allah *Glorified is He* mentions 'running' (*Ya Sin*: 20) which means that he was running quickly. And 'He said, "O my people, follow the messengers"' (*Ya Sin*: 20); the man was clearly using a softening tone to approach the one being called, as if he is saying: 'O my family, O my kinsfolk, O my children', which is an indication of the bonds of love and mercy that existed between him and them.

His saying: '... follow the messengers...' (*Ya Sin*: 20), indicates that the man is helping his people by mentioning the primary reason for following them, being the messengers. Then he gives them another reason by saying, 'Follow those who do not ask of you [any] payment, and they are [rightly] guided' (*Ya Sin*: 21). In other words, they did not ask for any price in return for their call to the message of Allah *Glorified is He*.

The phrase 'who do not ask of you [any] payment' (*Ya Sin*: 21) is not said unless the work that one is doing requires a wage, and a messenger does not come except to benefit those to whom he is sent. However, it is only logical for a messenger to ask to get paid for doing his job, in this case though, who is the only one capable of paying him in return for his services? No one can pay him back except Allah because the benefit of the messenger goes beyond the benefits of the life of this world to the benefits of the Hereafter, so who among the human beings can give the messenger what he truly deserves?

That is why all the messengers say, 'My reward is only from Allah...' (*Yunus*: 72). In other words, you people do not possess the extent of my reward and you cannot possibly estimate it. The only one who can give me my reward is the One for whom I work. Every messenger said these words except for two of them, Ibrahim (Abraham) and Musa (Moses) *peace be upon them*. Did you know why?

It was said that Ibrahim's (Abraham's) first call was made to his father Azar, so it would not have been appropriate of him to ask him for a reward for

calling him to the truth. Likewise, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* called Pharaoh who had raised him in his own house and had been gracious towards him. So how could he ask him for a reward?

A third consideration with regards to following the messengers is explained in the following verse when Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...and they are [rightly] guided’ (*Ya Sin*: 21). They were sent by Allah, the One Who sends who is guided upon the straight path that leads to Him. These messengers are guided in and of themselves, and so they can guide others. Therefore, the command and its rationale is clarified; these messengers did not ask for a reward and they did not call to misguidance, but rather to guidance.

Then this man turns to himself and addresses the people, ‘I am not commanding you to do something that I do not do myself, and if I was cheating you I would not cheat myself’. ‘And why should I not worship He who created me...’ (*Ya Sin*: 22), i.e. the one who created me from nothing the one who should be worshipped? He is the one who made me and brought me into existence from non-existence and provided for me when I had nothing, and He continues to bestow his blessings upon me. Therefore, what is going to prevent me from worshipping Him when he is the One Who should be worshipped? Even if my worship of Him is nothing other than me repaying Him for His blessings, without seeking a reward, then worshipping Him is obligatory.

This is not the speech of a messenger. It is the speech of a man who is an obedient believer and whose heart is rejoicing in faith. He thus wants to purify his faith and pass his guidance on to others in line with what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘None of you shall become a true believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.’⁽¹⁾

First, Allah *Glorified is He* created His creation. Then He entrusted the messengers with His Message for their guidance. The messengers, in turn, conveyed it to their companions, and whoever has something conveyed to them becomes responsible for it just like the messenger. That is why the Messenger of

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (13) and Muslim in his *Sahih* (45) in the Book of Faith from Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him with the following wording, ‘By the One in Whose hand is my soul, a slave does not truly believe until he loves for his neighbour’ – or he said, ‘for his brother’ – ‘what he loves for himself.’

Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'May Allah freshen the affairs of a person who hears something from us and communicates it to others exactly as he has heard it (i.e., both the meaning and the words), for it may be that the recipient of knowledge understands it better than the one who has heard it'⁽¹⁾.

Therefore, the responsibility of calling people to Allah is first, borne by the messengers and then those who believe in them, who received their guidance. This bearing is not a courtesy but a commandment from Allah. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you' (*al-Baqara*: 143). Accordingly, when the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* testified that he has conveyed the message to you, it will be obligatory for you to testify against mankind that you conveyed the message to them because those who believe in the message are an extension for the Messenger.

As we have seen before, the believing man, who came from the farthest end of the city, striving to exalt the word of truth and assist the messengers, was not a messenger and no one gave him that responsibility- he acted voluntarily. This is because his strong faith prompted him to do so.

He took it upon himself to advise himself first when he said, 'And why should I not worship He who created me? ...' (*Ya Sin*: 22) This is politeness in presenting the call and making it more appropriate for it to be accepted. His saying, 'And why should I not...' (*Ya Sin*: 22), is as if he would be amazed at himself if he did not believe in the one who brought him into being, and amazement at oneself is the sincerest form of expression. It is as if one is not arguing and not cheating, but rather saying what is in one's heart, as Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* said, 'Why do I not see the hoopoe...?' (*an-Naml*: 20)

The answer is not going to come from anyone else. It can only come from him, as if he is saying, 'The hoopoe must be here, but I cannot see it'. The rule is that one uses the whole and the whole is present, and the amazement is on my part; why do I not see him? Then he repeats, '...or is he among the

(1) Narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (1/437) and At-Tirmidhi in his (*Sunnan*) (2657, 2658) and Ibn Majah in his *Sunnan* and Al-Hamidi (1/47) from the Hadith of 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud Allah be pleased with him.

absent?’ (*an-Naml*: 20), which means that either the impediment is on his part or because of it- as if he is casting doubt in the former- then he scrutinises the matter and finds that it is the hoopoe’s fault.

Therefore, His saying: ‘And why should I not worship He who created me and to whom you will be returned?’ (*Ya Sin*: 22) indicates that the matter of bringing into existence and creation necessitates that you worship the one who brought all things into existence, and to do otherwise demands astonishment.

That is why, in the chapter of *al-Baqara*, Allah *Glorified is He* dictates to us how to address the disbelievers: ‘How can you disbelieve in Allah when you were lifeless and He brought you to life...’ (*al-Baqara*: 28), which means, ‘How can you disbelieve in Allah Who has created you and provided for you?’ This is not rational or logical, so tell us about how you have disbelieved.

The Arabic noun *fatr* (creation) is the amazing act of creating something that nothing precedes it in form, colour, or resemblance. That is why when Allah *Glorified is He* talks about Himself, He says: ‘Originator of the heavens and the earth’ (*al-Baqara*: 217) which means that He created the heavens and the earth without there being any previous example that He imitated whilst creating.

Another meaning of ‘He who created me’ (*Ya Sin*: 22) is having faith in Him, the faith of one’s *fitra* (primitive nature). Therefore, one’s faith in Allah is either of gratitude towards the One Who created him and brought him into existence, for which there was no previous example, or the faith of one’s primitive nature upon which Allah Has brought mankind into existence.

When we reflect on the task of this man, we find that what was in his heart resembled what was in the rest of his bodily organs, i.e. the development of the stages of faith. How? The body consists of various limbs, and every limb has a task and a function. In order for this body to survive, it requires means of sustenance such as food, drink, and air.

After the process of taking in the food and the various blessings therein, such as teeth that cut, molars that crush, saliva that helps in the process of swallowing, digestive fluids, etc. the food is then absorbed into the blood. Next, the heart receives it and takes what it needs primarily so that it has the capacity to pump the blood to the remaining organs and each one of them can carry out their tasks.

The same applies to this man and how his faith grew stronger. After believing and having faith settle in his heart, he wanted to pass on this faith to his people and spread among them the guidance that his heart has absorbed. He, therefore, represents the heart of the messages. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Indeed, for everything there is a heart, and the Quran's heart is *Ya Sin*.'⁽¹⁾ It came in the last phase of the voluntary messages that serve the obligatory message.

As long as the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* informs us that *Ya Sin* is the heart of the Quran, then the believer must accept all of its benefits that have been authentically related to us from him. It is not necessary that we stop at the rationale behind everything because faith, as we have said, is both unseen and witnessed. From the truthfulness of what he has witnessed, the believer takes evidence for the existence of what he has not seen.

Therefore, let us take these Hadiths with pleasure such that if you read The Quran and you do not find any Hadiths regarding it, the fact that you are reading Allah's words is of enough benefit to you. That is why we have seen some of them writing down the Hadiths that encourage the reading of the Quran.

It was narrated in a Hadith that if the Quran was read in the presence of a sick person, rows of angels would come to him to the extent that every letter is worth ten thousand angels. They do not leave him until he dies. Then they watch him being washed and carried to his final resting place, and they watch people praying for him and burying him.⁽²⁾

In another narration, 'Whoever has *Ya Sin* read in their presence whilst sick, or he reads it himself, Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* will come to him with

(1) Narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad (5/26) from the Hadith of Ma'qal ibn Yassar that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, '*Ya Sin* is the heart of the Quran. No man reads it desiring Allah's pleasure and the abode of the Hereafter except that He forgives him, and you should read it over your deceased.'

(2) Some Hadiths regarding the virtue of *Ya Sin* are authentic, but what is mentioned here is not one of them. At-Tirmidhi, Ad-Darimi and Al-Bayhaqi in Shua'b Al-Iman narrated that Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him said, 'The Messenger of Allah said, "Everything has a heart, and the heart of the Quran is *Ya Sin*. Whoever reads *Ya Sin* once, Allah writes for him that he recited Quran ten times"'. This has also been mentioned by As-Suyuti in Ad-Dur Al-Manthur (7/27).

a cup of water. He will thus drink from it and never thirst again, and he will not need the pools of the Prophets.’⁽¹⁾

In the following verse: ‘...and to whom you will be returned?’ (*Ya Sin*: 22), the man explains: do not think that you can escape from Allah because you are in His Grasp. You came into existence by His command and you were witnesses to this creation. Likewise, you will be brought back to Him in the end. If you cannot appreciate the blessing of being brought into existence, then appreciate the result of going back.

We notice in this verse that the believing man is speaking about himself in the singular form, ‘And why should I not worship He who created me...’ (*Ya Sin*: 22), and then he turns from the singular to addressing the plural and the denying people, ‘...and to whom you will be returned?’ (*Ya Sin*: 22) He did not say, ‘...and to whom I will be returned?’ Why? The answer is simple, it was said because obedience is the foundation of worship and it only comes in three stages:

The first stage, you obey the one in whom you find a perfect example that deserves to be obeyed and to be praised for his perfection, even if do not gain any benefit from him. For example, when you look at a wonderful and expressive poem and you are amazed at the one who said it, you praise him even though none of it brings any advantage to you. However, you are able to appreciate the poet for who he is.

The second stage, you obey a man and appreciate him because of a benefit that goes back to you, We very often see people serving a cowardly man who does not deserve to be served, and the people do not serve him except out of greed for what he has.

(1) *The closest meaning I found to this is what Al-Bayhaqi narrated in Shua'b Al-Iman from Abu Qalaba based on, 'Whoever reads Ya Sin is forgiven. Whoever reads it in the presence of a small amount of food it becomes sufficient. Whoever reads it in the presence of a deceased person will make it a source of ease for him. Whoever reads it in the presence of a woman who is experiencing a difficult labour will find ease thereafter. Whoever reads it, it is as if he has read the entire Quran eleven times.' Al-Bayhaqi said, 'This is how it has been narrated to us from Abu Qalaba and he is one of the great followers.' He is not saying this because it is authentic but merely to inform.*

The third stage, you obey an individual or you respect simply because you are afraid of him and you fear his evil.

Indeed the man who ran from the farthest end of the city affirmed the first two stages when he said, 'And why should I not worship He who created me' (*Ya Sin*: 22), i.e. I worship Him because His perfection means that He deserves to be worshipped. I also worship Him because of His continuous blessings. As for the third stage, he applies it to the deniers from among his people by saying, '...and to whom you will be returned?' (*Ya Sin*: 22) In other words, wake up people! If you have not appreciated Allah for His attributes of perfection, and for which He is loved and you have not appreciated Allah for His continuous blessings towards you, then know that you will go back to Him, and the end and final destination belongs to Him. He has power over you and no one escapes from His Grasp.

Then the man emphasises the matter of worshipping Allah alone, and he continues:

ءَاتَخِذْ مِنْ دُونِهِ ءَالِهَةً إِن يُرِدْنِ الرَّحْمَنُ بِضُرٍّ لَا تُغْنِ عَنِّي
شَفَعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُنْقِذُونِ ﴿٢٣﴾ إِنِّي إِذًا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٢٤﴾
إِنِّي ءَامَنْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ فَاسْمَعُونِ ﴿٢٥﴾

**How could I take besides Him any other gods, whose
intercession will not help me and who would not be able to
save me if the Lord of Mercy wished to harm me? [23] Then
I would clearly be in the wrong [24] I believe in your Lord,
so listen to me [25] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 23 - 25)**

The questioning in 'Should I take...' (*Ya Sin*: 23) carries the meaning of both astonishment and denying; how can he take a god besides Allah when Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who created him. When you consider the meaning of the verb 'I take', you will find that those false deities do not exist in the first place, so the meaning of 'taking a god' means that it is not a god in reality and it does not deserve to be a god. However, you have propped it up and made it a god. An example of this is attributing false children to Allah, as in the following verse. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Allah has not taken any son, nor has there ever been with Him any deity. [If there had been], then each

deity would have taken what it created, and some of them would have sought to overcome others. Exalted is Allah above what they describe [concerning Him].’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 91)

Allah *Glorified is He* explains to us that He does not have a son, and if you say that Allah has taken a son, this would mean that a son had come to Him and He had adopted him. Indeed, Allah is Greatly Exalted above such a thing. Likewise, you can say that you have taken a son, meaning that a son came to you and you did not give birth to him, but rather, you adopted him.

Therefore, as long as those gods are taken, it means that they never existed originally. It is as if the man is fixing the people’s concept of worship.

If you ponder on the following verse, ‘...if the Most Merciful intends for me some adversity...’, you will notice an expression that contains a subtle transition which should be considered because the attribute of mercy in ‘The Most Gracious’ contradicts harm, so how can the context incorporate the two?

If you interpret what happens to you or befalls you from Allah’s decree to be harm, then you will reason that it is from the Most Merciful. So, whatever happens to you must be what the Most Merciful Has decreed. That is why we say, ‘My Lord, I praise You for all that You have decreed and all that You have destined, praise of submission to Your judgment and certainty in Your wisdom’.

It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is teaching you how to submit to His will: ‘Wake up and realise that not everything you see according to your own flawed judgment and lack of knowledge is of harm to you. This is because the one causing it to happen is the Most Merciful, and hidden within this harm is great benefit, just like the loving father who brings his son to the doctor so that he can undergo some painful surgery, or amputate a limb so that the rest of the body can be healed, for this is harm in an outward sense but in reality there is mercy in it’.

That is why we previously said that if your son came to you and he was bleeding, you would not welcome this with pleasure nor with anger until after you had asked who had done it to him. If it were an enemy, you would be angry and if it were someone close to you, you would accept what happened with contentment and trust, and you would say to your son, ‘Your uncle must have seen you doing something wrong and therefore he punished you’.

Likewise, do not judge what Allah has willed to happen to you as anything other than that which has come from the Most Merciful Lord who is more merciful to you than a mother to her child. You are His creation and His making. For example, if you look at those who have taken their statues for gods, you will find that they take really good care of it. They look after it and work on beautifying it. It is like when you see a carpenter, for example, chiselling wood. Would you say that he is harming what he has made? No. He is improving it and beautifying it. That is why Allah says in a Qudsi Hadith⁽¹⁾: ‘O son of Adam! I am beloved to you so I have a right over you that you be beloved to Me.’⁽²⁾ After this show of affection from the Creator to the creation, can anything happen to them that will harm them?

In our daily lives, we see many testimonies to this matter. For example, you often miss a train or a bus and then you have to take the next one, on the way you find that the train or bus was involved in some sort of accident. So, you change your viewpoint, which was anger at missing the train, and it becomes gratitude to Allah because He saved you. Your attitude was different. Therefore, you should look at the one who makes destiny happen to you. Do not look at superficial benefits because Allah has wisdom in what He causes to happen, whether you understand it or not.

We also often see one of our children, for example, failing an exam, even though he had revised, worked hard, acquired much knowledge, etc. However, something happened to him, a sickness, or other, and he was not successful. A superficial glance at the matter would make you think that it is something evil and a great loss, causing you to be angry. But if you look carefully and reflectively, you will see that Allah Has a wisdom behind this failure.

In such a situation, a rational father will say to his son, ‘My son, I praise Allah because you are always successful, and maybe if you had been successful this

(1) Qudsi Hadiths are attributed to Allah *the Most High* and related from Him. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* would receive the meaning from Allah, by way of inspiration or dream, and then he would inform his community of this in his own words. This is contrary to the remaining Hadiths, as the Messenger of Allah would not attribute them to His Lord, nor relate them from Him.

(2) Included by Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali in *Ihya` Ulum Ad-Din* (4/296) and he said, ‘In some books: “My slave! It is your right that I am beloved to you, and My right over your is that you are beloved to me.”’

year you would have felt prey to people's envy of you. This is a golden opportunity to improve your score next time so that you can join your dream college'.

This is how the father strengthens his son's relationship with Allah and increases his faith in his Lord, and at the same time distancing him from anger and lack of contentment in Allah's decree. This is a matter with which fathers should be concerned.

Therefore, the issue that we want to stop at and examine in this verse is that if the Most Merciful does something that appears to be harmful and contradictory to this attribute, then this is due to your lack of judgment. In the greater scheme of things it is not contradictory, but rather, it is merciful.

His saying: '...their intercession will not avail me at all...' (*Ya Sin*: 23) means that the intercession of those gods, if they do have an intercession, is of no benefit because they have been put forward as partners and equals to Allah. So how can their intercession be accepted in His presence? A condition of intercession is that the one interceding is beloved to the one who is interceded for. Those gods, supposing that they had an intercession, would be unacceptable according to Allah even though they, in and of themselves, are excused because they never sinned. They never claimed that they were gods, but human beings claimed they were.

We have already mentioned that those gods are excused from being worshipped besides Allah. Indeed, the poet who wrote the following lines of poetry was able to articulate this meaning as if those gods themselves were talking. He said,

They worship us and we are more worshipful of Allah
Than those who stand in the late hours of the night
They have committed an act of ignorance as
They committed it against the Son of Maryam (Mary) and the disciples
They mistook our silence as evidence against us
And we became fuel for fire because of them
Indeed, we are all sinful except for the one
Who will be saved by the Mercy of the All-Forgiving

His saying: 'nor can they save me' means that when the intercessor is given his intercession, he can save the one interceded for from those who are with him. As for those gods, their intercession will not be accepted and they will not be able to save whoever asks them to intercede for him.

We have already clarified the meaning of intercession, and it comes from asking for pardon or forgiveness. In other words, if a man has a problem that he is not able to solve himself, he asks someone else to help him. This person joins him to strengthen him in solving this matter, so after being one he, with the help of another, becomes a pair, *shaf'*, meaning 'two'.

When Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to make this matter clear to us, He tells us in the chapter of *al-Baqara*: 'And fear a Day when no soul will suffice for another soul at all, nor will intercession be accepted from it, nor will compensation be taken from it, nor will they be aided' (*al-Baqara*: 48).

He also says in another verse of the same chapter: 'And fear a Day when no soul will suffice for another soul at all, and no compensation will be accepted from it, nor will any intercession benefit it, nor will they be aided' (*al-Baqara*: 123). You will notice that the beginning of each of these two verses is the same but the endings are different. Why? It is because what the pronoun refers to is different; we have here a soul that is compensating and a soul that is being compensated for. If you make the pronoun refer to the one being compensated for, the one being compensated for cannot intercede for himself, but rather, he will try to make up for whatever harm he has caused so that he can pay his dues. If righteousness is not accepted from him, he looks for someone who will intercede for him. Therefore, the meaning is that uprightness will not be accepted from this soul and it will not be benefitted by anyone else's intercession.

If you make the pronoun refer to the soul that is compensating, i.e. the one that intercedes, for the intercessor steps forward to intercede at first, and if his intercession is not accepted, he presents righteousness and bears the expenses of the redemption.

Therefore, those gods – supposing that they have an intercession – will be unable to save whoever should seek refuge in them from the grip of Allah as it is an intercession that is rejected and not accepted. They are not suited for

intercession or saving, and this meaning is clear in His saying: ‘O people, an example is presented, so listen to it. Indeed, those you invoke besides Allah will never create [as much as] a fly, even if they gathered together for that purpose. And if the fly should steal away from them a [tiny] thing, they could not recover it from him. Weak are the pursuer and pursued’ (*al-Hajj*: 73).

So, when the man, says, ‘Indeed, I would then be in manifest error’ (*Ya Sin*: 24), he means, ‘If I did that and went to worship those gods, I would be in error ‘manifest error’, i.e. clear. His saying: ‘Indeed, I would then be in manifest error’ is as if the error would surround him and encompass him from all directions, such that he would not be able to be saved from it.

Then this believing man says, ‘Indeed, I have believed in your Lord, so listen to me’ (*Ya Sin*: 25). It would be correct to say that this speech was addressed to the messengers whom the man had come to assist in their call and support them, for he looked at them and said, ‘Indeed, I have believed in your Lord...’ (*Ya Sin*: 25), and the meaning of ‘...so listen to me’ is; hear what I am saying in order to support you, and bear witness that I am acting voluntarily with this faithful support. No one has commanded me to do so.

It would also be correct to say that this speech is directed towards the denying people, as he says to them, ‘Indeed, I have believed in your Lord’ (*Ya Sin*: 25) which means that Allah is your Lord in spite of you even though you disbelieve in Him, I respect His Lordship over you and I believe in it so I can be included in the greatness of this Lordship, ‘...so listen to me’, i.e. listen to what I have said so that I can say that I have carried out what I am obliged to do in your regard. I have conveyed the message to you and I have not cheated you or deceived you.⁽¹⁾

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

(1) *In the first time, he was addressing the messengers, according to Ibn Mas`ud's narration which was mentioned by Al-Qurtubi in his Tafsir (8/5654) and As-Suyuti narrated it in Ad-Dur Al-Manthur (7/52). As for the second time, he was addressing his people, Al-Qurtubi narrated it in his Tafsir from Ka`ab Al-Ahbar and Wahb ibn Munabbih. The verse follows both interpretations.*

قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ قَالَ يَئِيتَ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ
 بِمَا غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ

He was told, ‘Enter the Garden,’ so he said, ‘If only my people knew [26] how my Lord has forgiven me and set me among the highly honoured [27] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 26 - 27)

Using the passive verb ‘it was said’ is for the sake of generalisation because who said to him ‘enter Paradise’ and when? You can find the answer to this question in the following verse, ‘Indeed, those who have said, “Our Lord is Allah” and then remained on a right course - the angels will descend upon them, [saying], “Do not fear and do not grieve but receive good tidings of Paradise, which you were promised.”’ (*Fussilat*: 30) Accordingly, the man who adopted this position of faith voluntarily from the farthest end of the city came and rushing to support the messengers in a matter that he had not been burdened with in the first place. He came to the people with proofs and evidences that the messengers themselves had not brought. This way, he deserves the angels to descend upon him and give him glad tidings of paradise. Or Allah is using the past tense form, ‘It was said...’ to inform us of what He will tell him after his death when he enters paradise, which is how Allah shows appreciation and esteem to the man.

One of this man’s qualifications for entering paradise is that he did not look at his own faith, but he also looked for that of his brothers, to such an extent that he was given the glad tidings of paradise and after entering it, this did not stop him from thinking about his people, but rather, he said, ‘I wish my people could know...’ (*Ya Sin*: 26). In other words, the blessings that I am now in and the result of faith and obedience, if they knew what I know, they would attain what I have attained. If they knew, they would flock towards faith and engage in obedience more than they did so in disbelief and disobedience.

In His saying: ‘Of how my Lord has forgiven me and placed me among the honoured’ (*Ya Sin*: 27), you will notice that forgiveness precedes honour, and this matter is called emptying and filling. We already gave an example of this which was a garment that you want to iron, for example. Are you going to use the iron to clean it? No. You are going to clean it first and then you are going to beautify it by ironing it.

Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* and He is above all kinds of examples, cleanses His slave of his sins before he enters paradise. He purifies him of what is attached to him, the emptying, and then He honours him with paradise, the filling. This meaning is clear in His saying: ‘So he who is drawn away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise has attained [his desire]’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 185).

Allah *Glorified is He* bestows blessing upon us by moving us away from hell with the forgiveness of sins and then honouring us by admitting us into paradise out of His Generosity and Bounty.

Then *the Almighty* says:

وَمَا أُنْزِلْنَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ مِنْ جُنْدٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا كُنَّا مُنْزِلِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾
 إِن كَانَتْ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ خَمِيدُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

**After him We did not send any army from heaven
 against his people, nor were We about to [28]
 There was just one blast, and they fell down
 lifeless [29] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 28 - 29)**

We know from the context of these two verses that the denying people killed this volunteering man, or that he died of natural causes.⁽¹⁾ It is expected that Allah will punish them for their denial of the three messengers first and then for their denial of this man who came from the farthest end of the city, rushing to advise them. So, what did Allah do to them?

He says, what can be interpreted as; ‘Indeed, the matter of these deniers is more worthless than sending a host from the sky to destroy them’. One blast was merely enough to wipe them out. The meaning of, ‘And We did not send down upon his people after him...’ (*Ya Sin*: 28) is that after the sincere

(1) *Ibn Kathir* says in his *Tafsir* (3/568), ‘*Ibn Ishaq* said, conveying from *Ibn ‘Abbas*, *Ka‘ab* and *Wahb*, that when the man said that, his people jumped on him and killed him. While *Qatada* narrated that they stoned him to death, and the man said- while they were stoning him- ‘May Allah have mercy on my people for they do not know.’ In another interpretation, *Al-Qurtubi* mentioned a few narrations in his *Tafsir* (7/5654), one of which is *Ibn Mas‘ud*’s where he said that they killed him by stepping on his stomach with their feet, and then threw him down the well of *Rass*. That is why they were referred to as the *People of the Well* or the *People of Ar-Rass* in the *Quran*.

advice, the exhortations and the proofs that were voluntarily given, 'nor would We have done so' (*Ya Sin*: 28). In other words, we did not send any and it was not appropriate for us to send a host from the sky because the matter is much more trivial than that. 'It was not but one shout' (*Ya Sin*: 29) i.e. it was only a single blast, '...and immediately they were extinguished' (*Ya Sin*: 29). The phrase '...and immediately they were extinguished' indicates that they were so fanatical in their disbelief that they were like a blazing fire of anger against the messengers, first, and secondly against the man who volunteered. So Allah extinguished it.

After saying these words, which can be said by every believer who sees the destruction of the disobedient and the outcome of the disbelievers to whom death has reached before they themselves reached faith, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

يَحْزَنُ عَلَى الْعِبَادِ مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِّن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

**Alas for human beings! Whenever a messenger
comes to them they ridicule him [30]
(The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 30)**

This word 'regret' is often used when someone we love misses out on some goodness. Regret here is for the servants who denied Allah's messengers and mocked them. This is a matter that must be regretted by every believer because Allah *Glorified is He* created you and created things for you before He summoned you into existence.

He created for you the essentials of your material life and He maintained your material well-being by placing in earth all the nourishment, the necessities and the luxuries that you will ever need. Does it make sense to provide all of this for the body and leave the spirit with nothing even though it is more important than the body?

The spirit must be given something. It must be given some nourishment and values. Values are what Allah demands of His servant because you are going to be a worshipper of Allah; you are going to obey His commands and

refrain from what He has prohibited. This is the way that He assigned you: ‘Do this and do not do that’.

That is why you find that material sustenance and the essentials of physical life are provided for all, the believer and the disbeliever, the obedient and the disobedient. Allah *Glorified is He* is the one who summons them all into existence, and that is why He takes it upon himself to provide for them in the same way that you would invite, for example, a guest to your house. You would prepare for him food and drink and a sleeping area for him to stay with you. All of mankind has been given this gift.

As for the giving of values and the spirit, some of them have taken it and some of them have left it. This is because the gift of material sustenance empowers the passions of one’s ego, but values restrict these passions and restrain them from certain things. Whenever values restrict the desires of the ego, one abandons them and slips away from them.

The way of values has come from one who loves you and is concerned for your benefit, as we have already mentioned in the Qudsi Hadith that the Lord of Might says, ‘You are beloved to me, and it is My right over you that I am beloved to you.’ You are the one who benefits from this way because Allah *Glorified is He* created you with all His attributes of perfection. If you obey Him, this does not increase Him in perfection, and if you disobey Him, this does not decrease Him at all in terms of His attributes, and nothing harms Him.

That is why Allah made from His servants the rich and the poor, even though Allah *Glorified is He* is fully capable of making all of us rich such that none of us would have need of someone else. If the poor person reflected on the wisdom behind his poverty, he would praise Allah and he would know that his poverty is a condition for the faith of the rich person, while the rich person is not a condition for the faith of the poor person. The rich person needs me before I need him. The rich person strives and becomes tired and must deal with the means of provision, trade and suffer the causes of profit and loss. Then he comes to my door and gives me Allah’s right regarding his wealth, while I am free of concern.

The rich person is obliged to perform *hajj*, and if he does not, he is liable to be punished. If he does perform *hajj*, it may be accepted or it may be rejected.

If his *hajj* is not accepted, then the obligation remains. This is the difference between one who is obliged to perform a pillar and one who is not obliged to do anything.

Therefore, the one who reflects will see that the poor person is more fortunate than the rich person is; the one who is unable is more fortunate than the one who is able.

We were with some brothers, and we wanted to perform the sunset prayer in the Hussayn Mosque. When we stood up to pray (a man named) Sayyid Jalal caught our attention and said: 'Wait two minutes because I have sent Sulaiman (some boy) to change ten pounds for me.' One of those present said: 'I have some new pounds on me so here is ten pounds that I can change for you.' Sayyid said: 'No, because the man I am intending to give it to will only accept the big pound from before', so he refused this new currency.

I said to myself: 'Glory be to Allah! This insane man that is sitting at the gate of the Hussayn Mosque, and he is such-and-such, is making the greatest economist in Egypt, Sayyid Jalal, subservient to him, and he had with him the minister, Ahmad Ta'ima, to help him provide the money that this man liked.

It was amazing that from amongst these people was one sitting at the gate of the Hussayn Mosque and he was crossing his legs, and the retinue of the minister and ministers passed by him and he did not pay any attention to them. He was not concerned with the retinue, and the guards and the world around him. What does this mean, then? It means that he was preoccupied with something greater than all of this, and that Allah had manifested to him that which had made him unaware of this life and what was around him.

That is why one of them saw the retinue of one of these ministers and said to the other: 'By Allah, we are in bliss, and if these people knew about it, they would fight us with swords'. Are these people not masters? Are they not noble?

Therefore, every believer who sees the final end of the deniers and the destruction of the disbelievers in this story and those that resemble it must say these words 'How regretful for the servants.' Why? It is because it is from the perfection of one's faith that the believer feels regret for the one who does not taste the flavour of virtue and the bliss of obedience. He is wretched and thus

deserving of someone who will sympathise with him and be grieved by his state. Also, the believer loves for his brother what he loves for himself, and indeed he loves goodness for all of humanity. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٣١﴾
وَلَئِنْ كُلُّ لَمَّا جَمِيعٌ لَدَيْنَا مُحْضَرُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

**Do they not see how many generations We have destroyed
before them, none of whom will ever come back to them? [31]
[Yet] all of them will be brought before Us [32]
(The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 31-32)**

It suffices these deniers to look at the outcome of deniers before them and the punishment that befell them; Allah destroyed them with no one left out. The verb ‘seen’ refers to both knowing and seeing. You can say ‘I saw the scene’ and this is referring to seeing, and you can say ‘I see this opinion’ and this means that you come to know it. Seeing limits your information to what your eyes encounter, whilst knowing gives what your eyes and your other limbs encounter, so knowing is broader than seeing. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, addressing His Prophet: ‘Have you not seen, [O Muhammad], how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant?’ (*al-Fil*: 1)

It is known that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was born in the Year of the Elephant, and possibly after this event. Therefore, he did not physically see any of it, but despite that his Lord addresses him with ‘Have you not seen’, meaning ‘Do you not know?’ either by being told the story by his people or by Allah *Glorified is He* informing him of it.

Physically seeing events is the most reliable means of realisation because it is as they say, ‘With the eye you do not say “Where?”’ But why is the context changed from ‘Do you not know?’ to ‘Have you not seen?’ It is said: ‘The True Lord *Glorified is He* indicates to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘Indeed My revelation to you of something is more reliable than you seeing it with your own eyes’.

His saying ‘Have you not seen’ means that amongst these people were those who had actually seen the destruction of the deniers, and on their travels

and trade journeys in the winter and summer had passed by their houses that were completely devastated. The meaning of 'how many' is that there were many, and it is a matter that is beyond calculation. It is similar to you saying to someone who denies your courtesy: 'How good have I been to you'! It is as if you are saying to him: 'I trust your judgement and I am asking you for an answer'; by this mean, your statement has become an affirmation voiced by him.

Regarding the meaning of 'generations', it is a period of time that lasts one hundred years, His saying 'that they to them will not return?' could have more than one meaning according to what the pronouns 'they' and 'them' refer to. This is because the verse is talking about the previous generations that have perished while addressing those who are denying at present. If the plural third person pronoun 'they' refers to the generations that have perished, then the meaning is: Indeed, they will not return, and we have not see any of them come back after their destruction. If the pronoun refers to those being addressed at present, then the meaning is: Indeed, you who are being addressed! Your lineage does not go back to those whom Allah has destroyed because Allah *Glorified is He* annihilated them such that no individual and no progeny were left.

In summary, the verse means that the destruction of the disbelievers and the deniers is not something new, but rather, it is a practice that has been followed throughout time. The Quran relates to us what happened to `Ad, Thamud, and Pharaoh. Allah *Glorified is He* has left traces to prove the veracity of what Allah *Glorified is He* has informed us, and here we see America, for example. America is the superpower of modern civilization and at the forefront of ingenuity, inventing and exploring space, but despite this, they come to Egypt, for example, to see the remnants of the Pharaohs that were built thousands of years before `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and despite their scientific progress, they are amazed at how the pyramids were built.

This practice – the practice of destroying the disbelievers – has evidence that can be seen in the modern age. Russia, which committed suicide, look at what it did in Chechnya, this small Islamic country, at a time when we were inadequate in our support, or our support for them would not have matched the power and tyranny of these transgressors. That is why Allah responded to the enemies of His religion and avenged them in the earthquake of Sakhalil.

His saying in the following verse: ‘And indeed, all of them will yet be brought present before Us’ comes after His saying: ‘that they to them will not return?’ to clarify that there is no returning in this life; and if not, had they not any return in this life or the Hereafter, then death would have been a relief for these deniers. This is as Fakhr Ad-Din Ar-Razi⁽¹⁾ has said that the meaning is: ‘They are not returning in this life. As for the Hereafter, they have to return for the reckoning, for every major and minor act.’

The phrase ‘all of them’ refers to every single individual from amongst them. It is also not conditional that they are gathered together, but rather, each individual comes on his own so that they can see the humiliation and debasement of the people who have wasted themselves and the disbelievers who have made from amongst themselves a god that is to be obeyed.

The phrase ‘be brought present before Us’ indicates that one is forced and compelled to be gathered, against one’s wishes.

After the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions the issue of resurrection in ‘And indeed, all of them will yet be brought present before Us’, He relates evidence for the veracity of this matter because resurrection is one of those matters that many people deny. One poet has said⁽²⁾:

The doctor and the astrologer both claimed

That the bodies will not be gathered, so I said to the two of them

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- (1) Muhammad ibn `Umar Abu `Abdullah Fakhr Ad-Din Ar-Razi, Qurayshi of lineage, originated from Tabaristan... He was born in Rayy (modern-day Teheran) in the year 544 A.H. and this accounts for his name Ar-Razi. He was an Imam and Quranic commentator and the unique one of his age in the rational, transmitted, and ancient sciences. It was said: ‘Where is the speaker of Rayy?’ The people devoted themselves to his books during his lifetime and studied them amongst themselves. He was also a master of Persian. His various works include *Mafatih Al-Ghaib* and *Mahsal Afkar Al-Mutaqadimin Wa Al-Muta`akhirin*. He died in the year 606 at the age of 62. Az-Zirikli, *Al-A`lam* (6/313).
- (2) Abu Al-`Ala`, Ahmad ibn `Abdullah, At-Tanukhi, born in the year 362 A.H. in *Ma`ra Nu`man* and died there in the year 449 at the age of 86. He was a poet and philosopher. He was afflicted with smallpox as a child and became blind at the age of 4. He started composing poetry at the age of 11 and he used to wear coarse clothes. He also used to forbid causing pain to animals. His writings include *Risalat Al-Fuqran*, *Lazum Ma La Yulzam*) and others.

If what you are saying is true I have not lost anything
But if what I am saying is true then you are truly in loss⁽¹⁾

One advisor might say to you: 'If you go along the path of such-and-such then be careful and take precautions because there are wolves, predatory animals and brigand's. What if you take all these precautions but do not find anything? Of what was he making you scared? Likewise, there is my belief in resurrection, that if it does not benefit me, it has not harmed me, and your belief that if it does not harm you, it has not benefitted you.

The strongest argument that the philosophers have regarding resurrection is that they said: 'Imagine that a man dies and is buried, and his body disintegrates. Then a tree grows on his grave and nourishes itself from his remains. Then it comes to bear fruit and another man eats its fruits, thus causing the elements of the first man to reach him. So, when the resurrection takes place, how will these elements be resurrected, either from the first or from the last?

The proponents of this argument understood that the elements, when they are created, have a specific identity in creation, but did not understand that they have a generic identity as well. We say: Imagine a man that is afflicted with an illness which causes him to lose twenty kilos in weight. Then Allah guides a doctor to diagnose his sickness and prescribe some medicine for him. Then the man is cured and he nourishes himself until his body returns to its original weight. Where did the original elements that made up his weight before go? Are they the same elements that have come back to him after he has been cured?

Therefore, the matter is not the specificity of elements but the quantity of elements, and the immensity of trying to count the quantity of elements of every human being. If all the elements that exist in me, Muhammad Ash-Sha'rawi, were gathered together because the elements of all human beings are the same, they are the sixteen known elements that begin with, as we have mentioned,

(1) These lines are from the poem of Abu Al-'Ala' Al-Ma'ri and they are from the *Kamil Metre*. It consists of seven verses beginning with 'he said' instead of 'he claimed'. See his *Diwan* and *Al-Mawsu'ah Ash-Shi'riyyah*.

oxygen, then carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and so forth. However, individuals differ in the amounts of these elements that each of us has. You all have oxygen, carbon, and nitrogen, but I may have more oxygen and you may have more carbon, and so on.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* is teaching us that the issue is not the specific identity of the elements, or their specificity, but rather, it is the quantity of elements, for Allah *Glorified is He* says in the chapter of *Qaf*: ‘We know what the earth diminishes of them, and with Us is a retaining record.’ (*Qaf*: 4) This means that He preserves the amounts and calculates them according to their scales. Thus, if Allah *Glorified is He* wants to resurrect, He gathers a proportion of this and a proportion of that and gives it to so-and-so, and a proportion of this and a proportion of that is given to so-and-so and so forth. The matter does not stop at Him knowing these proportions, but rather, Allah preserves them and records them in a preserved book.

In another place, the True Lord refutes those who deny the resurrection and He says to them: ‘Why do you act arrogantly towards resurrection, when it is the restoration of something that did actually exist and its elements were separated? What is more amazing is that I brought it into existence from non-existence, so resurrection is easier than restoration: ‘And it is He who begins creation; then He repeats it, and that is [even] easier for Him.’ (*ar-Rum*: 27) This is if we agree with you in your understanding of things and follow your norms of thinking.

We have already clarified that the elements that Allah has created in the universe are as they are. They do not increase at all and they do not decrease at all. Water, for example, has always been the same since Allah created the earth, but it passes through its well-known cycle. Man, for example, drinks about a ton of water in his lifetime. Does he retain all of it? No, it comes out in the form of urine and its residue. After he dies, whatever fluid is left over evaporates and the earth absorbs it to start a new water cycle. This is how the elements of man take part in this cycle. And here the True Lord *Glorified is He* shows to these deniers the evidence:

وَأَيُّهُ لَّهُمُ الْأَرْضُ الْمَيِّتَةُ أَحْيَيْنَاهَا وَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهَا حَبًّا فَمِنْهُ يَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾
 وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا جَنَّاتٍ مِّنْ نَّخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ وَفَجْرْنَا فِيهَا مِنَ الْعُيُونِ ﴿٣٤﴾
 لِيَأْكُلُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ وَمَا عَمِلَتْهُ أَيْدِيهِمْ أَفَلَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

There is a sign for them in the lifeless earth: We give it life and We produce grain from it for them to eat [33] We have put gardens of date palms and grapes in the earth, and We have made springs of water gush out of it [34] So that they could eat its fruit. It was not their own hands that made all this. How can they not give thanks? [35] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 33 - 35)

This evidence is something that is witnessed and seen by everybody. No one can possibly deny it. We see the dry, desolate dead earth; when the rain comes, it turns green and life starts in it; it moves and produces. It is upon man to take evidence from what he witnesses for that which he does not witness.

In His saying ‘And a sign for them’ a sign is something amazing within its own category, like when you say, ‘So-and-so is a sign of nobility’, or ‘a sign of beauty’. This sign is for them, meaning only the disbelievers because the believer has no need of this sign. The believer says, ‘But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?’ (*Fussilat*: 53)

Seeking evidence for something is the first evidence of its existence. I would not exhaust myself looking for evidence unless I was convinced that this thing existed. Seeking evidence is the essence of evidence, and the believer only seeks evidence so that he can use it to debate with the one who does not believe, and thus show him Allah’s signs.

Regarding this sign, either you take it as a cosmic sign that indicates the power of Allah *Glorified is He* or you take it evidence that He, if He sends down rain on the dead earth, it moves and produces vegetation from every splendid pair.

The one who reflects on the earth finds that it is a sign in and of itself, and one of the greatest of Allah’s blessings, even if it was a rock that did not produce anything. It suffices as our temporary abode; upon it we dwell and in it we seek shelter, so what do you think about the fact that Allah gives it a

shade of life when it thrives with plants and then transforms into a wonderful colour green?

The revival of the earth is in stages. It is the revival of plants that are not rich in nutritional value such as grass, weeds, and shrubs. It suffices that this type clothes the face of the earth in beauty and splendour, while it settles the sand and establishes it on the face of the earth so that the wind does not blow it in our eyes. It is one of the phenomena of life on earth, and one of Allah's blessings. The other stage is that the earth grows plants that we nourish ourselves with, and they are of two types: the necessary seeds essentials for your life and the foundation of nourishment, the most important of them being wheat.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* indicates its importance when He says, 'And grain is having husks and scented plants.' (*ar-Rahman*: 12) It turns our attention towards the importance of bran which, until recently, we did not think were important and thus used it as fodder for livestock. It is narrated that Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* whom Allah gave a kingdom unattained for anyone after him, that he ate nothing but grits, i.e. coarsely ground grain.

That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And a sign for them is the dead earth. We have brought it to life.' This is the first stage, followed by 'and brought forth from it grain, and from it they eat.' These are the necessities.

Then 'And We placed therein gardens of palm trees and grapevines.' The date palm and the vines are specified because dates and grapes are the most important of fruits, and the nearest of them are from the necessities of nourishment, as they are nourishment for some and fruits for others. That is why the poet Shawqi said the following about dates:

The poor man's food is the rich man's desert

And the provision of the traveller and the stranger⁽¹⁾

We stop here at the tremendousness of the Quranic rendition because the speech is the Lord's speech, and it is upon us to unveil the aspects of immensity

(1) This verse is from a poem of Ahmad Shawqi, the 'Prince of Poets', from the *Mutaqarib Metre*, and the number of its verses are 21 beginning with:

I see a tree in the sky hiding itself
The cloud traversed an amazing sight.

therein. The scholars have noticed, may Allah reward them, that when the Quran talks about fruits, it says: 'of palm trees and grapevines' so the tree of the date-palm is mentioned, and the grape is mentioned, but the fruit of the date-palm, which is dates, and the tree of the grape are not mentioned.

When the scholars looked into the matter they found that Quran mentioned the date palm because it has a lot of benefits and it is always giving. Its benefit is not limited to its fruit. Indeed, what it contains is beneficial and profitable. It is enough for us to know that nothing ever falls from it but has a function and task: the trunk, the stalks, and the interior. Even the fibres can be used to make the most splendid of things. As for the grapevines, after you take its fruits nothing remains except a bunch of bent twigs that are of no benefit whatsoever.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'and caused to burst forth therefrom some springs' because the agricultural land that gives us this gift is irrigated by either rivers or rain, and if it is not supplied adequately by these two sources it is irrigated by springs; and they are the underground waters that flow in the depths of the earth, originally produced by rain water. This is as Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky and makes it flow as springs [and rivers] in the earth.' (*az-Zumar*: 21)

These springs are one of the phenomena of Allah's Power; there are those that we look for and drill and there are those that flow by themselves, naturally, with Allah's Power. It is as if the Lord *Glorified is He* is reassuring you of His Giving, so if you are in a land that does not receive rain and there is not a valley in which rivers flow then be reassured because in the depths of the earth there are springs that burst forth with fresh water suitable for drinking and irrigating land. We recently became aware of the necessity of cultivating the desert and reclaiming it, and we were assisted in this by the wells and underground water therein. All we had to do was look for them.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* explains the rationale behind causing the springs to pour forth. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'That they may eat the fruit thereof. And their hands have not produced it, so will they not be grateful?'

About His saying 'fruit thereof', they say that the fruits are seeds, dates, grapes and so forth, or from the fruits of causing the springs to pour forth. Some of them said: 'The fruits should be attributed to their source, so the

meaning is: from the fruits of the power that is in ‘Be!’ and what is not meant are the fruits nearby’.

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to take you out of tribulation with means, and turn your attention towards the First Causer. That is why He commands us, when water becomes scarce and the means do not help us, to seek refuge in the Causer *Glorified is He* by way of the drought prayer. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* is the final recourse in this issue. When you seek water, do not seek water by yourself but with that which is weaker than you are. If you are disobedient and ungrateful, you will seek water from the one who has not committed disobedience.

That is why, in the drought prayer, we have been commanded to take women, children and livestock, as if we are using some of them as a means to Allah and to purify them from disobedience. It is as if we are saying to our Lord: ‘O Lord! Indeed, we have disobeyed you and we do not deserve rain, so give us rain for the sake of these’.

Indeed, He commanded us in the drought prayer that we go out to Him and we do not wear our normal clothes, but rather we manifest humiliation and brokenness before Allah *Glorified is He*.⁽¹⁾

Now, after what has happened in the development of the use of water such that we have come to receive it in reservoirs and tanks, the connection between the Giver of the water and those benefitting from it has become distant. When the water is cut off, you do not think about the drought prayer, and you are not reminded of the one who gives the water. Rather, you think

(1) *Related by Ahmad in his Musnad (2/226), Ibn Majah, (1268) in his Sunnan and Al-Bayhaqi in his Sunnan, from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him who said: ‘Allah’s Prophet peace and blessings be upon him went out one day for the drought prayer and he prayed two units with us without a call to prayer or call to commence the prayer. Then he addressed us and supplicated to Allah, and he turned his face towards Mecca and raised his hands. Then he turned his cloak and put the right on the left and the left on the right.’ Ibn Hajar said in Fath Al-Bari (3/499): ‘The wisdom of this turning over has been differed over.’ Al-Mahlab was certain that it was done out of optimism; that the situation would change for the better. Ibn Al-‘Arabi followed him up by saying that one of the conditions of being optimistic is that you do not intend it. He said: ‘The turning over was a sign between him and his Lord. It was said to him ‘Turn over your cloak so that your situation turns for the better.’*

about what could have caused the water to be cut off so you ask about the tanks and the motor, etc. The means themselves have made you distant from the Creator of the means.

His saying: 'and their hands have not produced it' takes into consideration the role of man and his action. Some fruits are made ready to eat such as peaches, oranges, and cucumbers, while other fruits need to be treated and prepared before they can be eaten. It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* is determining your role for you, giving you your right, and reminding you of your work, regardless of how easy it is.

This matter is made clear when Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And have you seen that [seed] which you sow? Is it you who makes it grow, or are We the grower?' (*al-Waqi'a*: 63-64).

The Lord *Glorified is He* determines your work in ploughing the earth and preparing it for cultivation. This is your role. As for bringing forth vegetation, this belongs to Allah alone and we have no say in it.

Likewise, your Lord respects your work when you bring something into existence that did not exist, and He calls you a 'creator' accordingly, even if this thing that you created is made from known things already in existence. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'So blessed is Allah, the best of creators.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14)

If your Lord has respected you for creating something that did not exist, then you should respect Him for being the best of creators. You are a creator and your Lord is the best of creators. You are able to treat sand, for example, and make glass from it. This is a type of creation but the glass remains as it is. It is fixed upon the state in which it was created. You cannot give this glass the attribute of life. As for what Allah creates, He gives it the attribute of life and it grows, develops, procreates and so forth.

His saying: 'so will they not be grateful?', comes after mentioning the previous blessings which deem it necessary that you thank Allah for them, but this is not a command here. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to us: 'Answer this. I am asking you for an answer'. But Allah *Glorified is He* already knows that the answer cannot possibly be other than the affirmation of gratitude for His blessings.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

سُبْحَنَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ
وَمِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمِمَّا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

**Glory be to Him who created all the pairs of
things that the earth produces, as well as
themselves and other things they do not know
about [36] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 36)**

The phrase: ‘Exalted is He’ means absolute transcendence for the One Who exists by necessity, the Most Exalted above being governed by the laws of existence itself. That is why it is said with regards to every amazing matter, such as in the story of the Night Journey and the Ascension, for the Quran begins the story of the Night Journey with His words: ‘Exalted is He who took His servant by night.’ (*al-Isra*: 1) The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was made to travel by night from Mecca to Jerusalem. Then he was made to ascend to the seventh sky within a portion of the night, and this is considered something amazing. We should not measure this in relation to our own power, but to the power of the one doing it. This is because the action must be compared to the power of the one doing it, in terms of strength and weakness.

We clarified this matter previously when we said: ‘It is as if I said I climbed to the top of Everest with my young son, for example. You would say to me: ‘How can your small son climb to the top of Everest?’

The True Lord *Glorified is He* in His words ‘Exalted is He who took His Servant by night’ says in other words, ‘Do not be astonished by this matter because Muhammad did not say, “I went by night” but rather, “I was taken by night”, for indeed I am the one who took him by night and I am transcendent above time, place and power. If every action has its time measured in relation to the power of the one doing it, then compare the time to the doer who is the Most Exalted, and at that point you will find no time’.

That is why you find that the word ‘exalted’ is not said and has never been said before, except for Allah, despite the abundance of tyrants on the earth and despite there being those who claim divinity, and even the one who

said: 'I am your Lord, Most Exalted'. Despite this, it is not said except for Allah. When we remember Allah that is why we say: 'Glory be to You' and we do not say 'except You'. Why? Because the meaning is absolute transcendence, and it can only be for Allah

For Allah is lory and transcendence before the existence of anyone who can make Him transcendent, for He is transcendent in His Essence before the existence of anyone who can say 'Glory be to Allah'. This is the same as Him being a Creator before He creates and a provider before providing for anyone. Allah *Glorified is He* possesses the attribute before its effect appears in existence. It is similar to you saying, 'So-and-so is a poet'. Is he a poet because he recites a wonderful poem or is he a poet before he recites it? He is a poet before he recites the poem because if he did not have the gift of poetry, he would not have said it.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* is glorified before He creates the creation. Then, when He created the creation all created things glorified Him, and they still glorify Him and they will continue to glorify Him. Thus, as long as the universe is in a state of glorification, you should do likewise and glorify with them: 'Exalt the name of your Lord, the Most High.' (*al-A 'la*: 1)

The absolute transcendence of the True Lord *Glorified is He* has three stations:

The first: That His Essence is transcendent above all essences.

The second: That His Attributes are transcendent above all attributes because you can be described with wealth, but your wealth is not like the True Lord's wealth. You exist and Allah exists, but is your existence like His existence, etc.?

The third: That His Actions are transcendent above being compared to our actions. If it was said: 'Allah did such and such' beware of measuring His actions in relation to your actions. That is why we said regarding 'Exalted is He who took His Servant by night' that you should judge it according to the Power of the One doing it, not your own power.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* brings about something, the ones who are addressed first know it. They do not close the storehouses of His bounty but rather, they leave behind some reserves for everything that is to be found

afterwards, as a result of development and the coming together of pairs, for Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Exalted is He who created all pairs - from what the earth grows and from themselves and from that which they do not know.' Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'from that which they do not know.' It is not known to those who are addressed first, but it will be made known afterwards. The most prominent Quranic verse that indicates this matter is His saying: 'And [He created] the horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and [as] adornment. And He creates that which you do not know.' (*an-Nahl*: 8)

His saying 'and He creates that which you do not know' comes as a reserve for the means of transportation and communication that will come into existence afterwards such as cars, planes, rockets etc.

If you were to say: 'Why are these things that will come into existence later presented in a general way?' We say, 'It is because the intellect was incapable of conceptualizing them at the time of the initial address'. It had not seen anything like this, but when this thing was brought into existence, it will be seen clearly. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says in a general way because every day He will bring us something new and other amazing things that we have never seen before, the latest of these things that we have seen is the rocket. Who knows? Maybe it will not be long before we see something more amazing than that. We can thus include all these things under the banner of 'and He creates that which you do not know.' (*an-Nahl*: 8)

Likewise, here in His saying 'and from that which they do not know' we know the opposites in 'what the earth grows' and we have seen this, for example, in the pollination of the date palm and other crops. We know that from amongst them are crops that are both male and female, such as the date palm and the sycamore. However, there are other crops in which we know of no male or female, and the wind pollinates these kinds by Allah's Power, as He says: 'And We have sent the fertilizing winds.' (*al-Hijr*: 22)

In some crops, the Creator *Glorified is He* has made femininity and masculinity in one stalk, and it is the dominant view that this is the case with crops that are necessary for nourishment, such as corn and wheat, as these crops do not have a male stalk and a female stalk. Instead, they are in one stalk. In the corn stalk, for example, we find at the top of the stock a spike that carries the male

seeds of pollination and underneath it there is the corn cob from which the corn emerges that represents the crop's femininity. Then it comes into contact with the pollination seeds that have been scattered from above by the wind. That is why, if this corn does not emerge and protrude from the cob it is not producing a cob, and on the inside, it does not have any corn seeds. Why? Because it has not come into contact with the male seeds

It is amazing that you find the seeds of the corn gradually becoming bigger as you move from the upper part of the cob to the lower part because every corn is attached to one of the seeds of the cob. This corn represents the tube by which the pollen is transferred to the seed. However, the corns that descend to the lower part of the cob protrude out of it short and dispersed. Because of this they have the opportunity to come into contact with the largest amount of pollen, as opposed to corns on the top, because they are long and they accumulate together. That is why they do not get enough pollen, and thus their seeds are smaller in size such that the cob is thinner at the top and it dwindles.

All of us witness the veracity of His words 'And We have sent the fertilizing winds' when we look, for example, at the mountains, and they are desolate and dry, and then they turn green when the rain falls on them, so who puts these seeds in them?

In His saying: 'Exalted is He who created all pairs - from what the earth grows and from themselves and from that which they do not know.' The True Lord is reassuring us regarding the extent of the blessings and the extent of the one being blessed. By bringing opposites together, the type of crop remains and multiplies, and pairing is found in everything. Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: 'And in everything have We created pairs.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 49)

If you look at all of existence with the eye of knowledge; examining, testing and scrutinizing, you will find that everything in existence is in pairs so that the kind can be continued. We are aware of the issue of pairing in some of these things, and in others we are not aware. As long as the pair gathers in order to multiply, then one must pollinate the other, so what tells us the appointed time for this multiplication?

It is said: 'It is that which man has no say regarding it, for Allah knows its appointed time, and He causes everything to multiply according to what is

appropriate'. However, the problem for you, O man, is that if you had precise measurements, you would know that there are chemical changes in your body that require a very exact observation from you. These are the changes that indicate to you the appointed time for procreation.

Now they have invented a thermometer which a woman can use after menstruation, and she can use it to observe the temperature of her body. If it goes above 37 degrees, this means that there is a chemical change in the body. It indicates that the ovule has gone down. That is why we see that for many couples the process of giving birth is delayed, and this is because the woman does not have the means of exact observation that would allow her to know the time of ovulation that leads to the birth.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions pairing in 'from what the earth grows and from themselves and from that which they do not know.' He did not mention animals. Why? It was because Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned the highest creature which is man, the speaking mammal. The others are like him, and they are subordinate to him.

The meaning of 'and from that which they do not know' is that in the universe there are many things about which we are not aware of the procedure of pairing, but we might know about them in the future with the advancement of empirical science, as is the case with electricity, for example. We knew that it was a positive and a negative, but we do not benefit from electricity unless the negative and the positive make contact. As for matching a negative with a negative or a positive with a positive, the result is the opposite. The negative and the positive here are another example of pairing, as is the case with corn and other things that have been discovered by modern science.

Therefore, the phrase 'and from that which they do not know' has meanings that have occurred, and Allah informed of them before we discovered them so that we would know that the unseen that Allah informs us of comes as a preliminary step for another unseen matter that we will know in the future. It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* is drawing our attention and saying: 'Just as the material world confirms what I have informed you of the unseen, you should confirm what I have informed you of regarding the unseen of the Hereafter'.

After the True Lord *Glorified is He* talks about place, which is the earth, He talks about time because the life of man is nothing but a series of events and an event needs a time and a place. Thus, after the True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us about the earth and what is on it, as it is the place, He tells us about time. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَيَّاهُمْ إِلَّالُ نَسْلَخُ مِنْهُ النَّهَارَ فَإِذَا هُمْ مُظْلِمُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

The night is also a sign for them: We strip the daylight from it, and – lo and behold! – they are in darkness [37] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 37)

His saying ‘And a sign for them’, means specifically for them. It is not a sign for everyone because the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* believed due to his natural disposition. He did not need a proof in order to believe. Likewise, the believer does not look for proof unless it is to refute the one who denies.

And ‘is the night’ is the partner of daytime because the day consists of night and daytime so it is not quite correct to say that the night and the day are opposites; because the day consists of night and daytime. Both make up a day. However, some people look at His saying ‘for seven nights and eight days in succession’ (*al-Haqq*: 7), and designate the day to be the opposite of the night, as opposed to the daytime.

The night is darkness, and in it is a serenity that resembles the sleep that we have in the night, and sleep resembles death. The night is a pair of the daytime, but it does not oppose it or act against it as some people think. There is integration between them because each of them has a duty in life. The night allows us to rest and recuperate from the movement of the daytime so that we can start the new day with energy. The daytime is for working and striving; during it we benefit from our rest in the night.

They are acting in co-operation, not in opposition. Everything has a pair, but beware of taking it as an opponent. Rather, you should see it as something necessary that must exist. That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* turns our attention towards time in this matter, as He says, ‘Say, “Have you considered

if Allah should make for you the night continuous until the Day of Resurrection, what deity other than Allah could bring you light? Then will you not hear?” Say, “Have you considered if Allah should make for you the day continuous until the Day of Resurrection, what deity other than Allah could bring you a night in which you may rest? Then will you not see?”” (*al-Qasas*: 71-72) Each of them has a duty, and neither is independent of the other. It is from the subtle rendering of the Quran that He says about the night, ‘Then will you not hear?’ And about the daytime, ‘will you not see?’ It is because the night is darkness and one must use ears to be summoned. As for the daytime, it is light and in it we see.

Therefore, it is not correct for us to regard every pair of opposites as a pair of antagonists. Integration is not contradiction. Allah *Glorified is He* willed, with this issue, to solve a problem that has been disputed throughout the ages and until now, and it is the problem of male and female being opposites, or man and woman. Nowadays we hear those who say that the woman is like the man. How can this be when each of them has a specific task? They are complementary, just like the night and daytime.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* pointed out this complementary relationship: ‘By the night when it covers. And [by] the day when it appears. And [by] He who created the male and female. Indeed, your efforts are diverse.’ (*al-Layl*: 1-4) The meaning of ‘Indeed, your efforts are diverse’ is that it is different, and each has a task that they carry out in life. Those who now call for equality between men and women are only oppressing women because they want women to occupy the role of men in the proceedings of life. After that, they leave women to do the tasks that only they can do. Women have taken on the duties of men but men have not taken on the duties of women. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* created opposites so that they could be complementary and not mutually opposed, so that they would support one another and not act against one another, for it is a matter carefully measured.

In His saying ‘We remove from it [the light of] day,’ the Arabic equivalent to the verb ‘remove’ means to skin a sheep, so what is the connection between this issue and the light of the night and daytime? The original state is one of darkness, and darkness is not apparent unless there is a sudden light source. Then the light of daytime comes and covers this darkness. It is as if the daytime, when it

comes to cover the darkness, is like the skin that covers the flesh of a sheep. The True Lord *Glorified is He* wills that for the darkness to come and remove the light just as we remove the skin from the flesh of a sheep. Therefore, the night comes naturally because it is the original state. Darkness is the absence of light. As for light, it is a furnishing, and it requires a new means. If night was to be left as it is, it would remain dark. If there was no means of lightening, it would remain as night. Therefore, light has means. As for darkness, it does not have means that act when the darkness comes. Or you can say that the matter of darkness is non-existent, while the matter of light is existent. Thus, if it is said 'we remove from it the light of day' then the light that covers the darkness resembles the skin that covers the flesh of a sheep. The meaning is that we remove the cover of light that covers the day, and thus the darkness is released, i.e. it is manifested naturally and of its own accord. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَّهَا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ ﴿٣٨﴾

**The sun, too, runs its determined course laid down
for it by the Almighty, the All Knowing [38]
(The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 38)**

The sun is the means of light that We remove from the night. The one who tracks the movement of the sun will find that it has a general place where it appears, the east; and this general place is divided into several places based on the number of days in a year. The places where the sun appears differ. That is why we have seen that the ancient Egyptians, in their temples, realized this cosmic reality and they calculated it exactly. They put 365 windows in their temple and the sun would rise from one of them every day, in order, until it reached the last of them at the end of the year.

Man, already knew that the sun has a group of celestial bodies that orbit around it, and he called it the solar system, which is comprised of seven planets: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and Uranus. These seven have duped some scholars, such as Sheikh Al-Maraghi and Sheikh Muhammad 'Abdu into saying that they are the seven skies. However, scientists discovered other planets such as Neptune and Pluto. The solar system came to be

comprised of nine planets, all of them in the lowest sky, so there is no connection between them and the seven skies. Nonetheless the two sheikhs tried to make religious matters easier to understand.

Each of these planets in the solar system rotates on its own and orbits around the sun. By rotating on their own, the day comes into existence, and the year comes into existence by their orbiting around the sun. The two cycles are different in terms of speed. If a planet's rotation by itself was faster than its orbiting around the sun, its day would be longer than its year.

That is why one of the puzzling things in geography is: what is the longest day of the year? A day on Venus is longer than its year because when they calculated the movement of Venus in relation to a day on Earth, they found that a year on Venus is equivalent to 225 days on earth and a day on Venus is equivalent to 244 days on earth. This is because it rotates by itself at a speed that is greater than the speed at which it orbits around the sun.

The meaning of 'And the sun runs [on course] toward its stopping point' is the sun with its system, and the planets that orbit around it run to a star that the astronomers call Vega and the Arabs call it the (*Eagle*). The sun runs with its system at a speed of 12 miles per second. The sun moves and the planets that revolve around it moves. This is similar to a man riding some vessel. How do we calculate his movement and his speed?

If he is stationary, then his speed equals the speed of the vessel. If he is going in the same direction as the vessel then his speed equals his own speed plus the speed of the vessel. If he is moving in the opposite direction of the vessel, then his speed is equal to the speed of the vessel minus his own speed.

The meaning of 'toward its stopping point' is that an orbit can either be at the end of the year followed by the beginning of a new year, and it rises from its first place of appearance, or the orbit is the last part of its life and its end, when it is finished and it rolls up into a ball and expires. But what is it that moves this solar system? How does it run at this speed? We know that movement requires a force that fuels it, so what is this force that moves this system in this way and this persistence?

They said: 'It runs because Allah created it in a state of motion and flux. That is why it runs and nothing stops it, and it will continue running for as

long as Allah wills'. Therefore, He does not attach any force to it that moves it, and an example of this is His saying: 'Indeed, Allah holds the heavens and the earth, lest they cease. And if they should cease, no one could hold them [in place] after Him.' (*Fatir*: 41)

In the science of motion, there is a law called the law of inertia, and it states that every moving object continues to move until something stops it, and every stationary object remains stationary until something moves it. This law explains for us the movement of satellites and spaceships that remain moving for long periods of time.

We ask one another: What is the interval of time that moves them for the duration of this period? It is moving because it was placed in its domain in a state of motion. It remains moving, and nothing stops it because it is outside the range of gravity. Therefore, all that these tools need in terms of power is rocket power that can take it beyond the earth's gravitational pull. As for the satellites and spaceships, they keep revolving without any force and without any fuel.

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* reminds us of His Grace represented by this motion; He says, '(And) that' (*Ya Sin*: 38), i.e. the previously mentioned movement of the night and the daytime and the running of the sun; this '...is laid down by the will of the Almighty, the All Knowing' (*Ya Sin*: 38); that is all of this running and all of this motion have been laid down by the Will of Allah. 'The Almighty' here is completely appropriate because the meaning is that the Almighty is the One Who is not subject to laws, because Allah *Glorified is He* is the creator of laws.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَالْقَمَرَ قَدَرْنَاهُ مَنَازِلَ حَتَّىٰ عَادَ كَالْعُرْجُونِ الْقَدِيمِ ﴿٣٩﴾

**We have determined phases for the moon until
finally it becomes like an old date-stalk [39]
(The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 39)**

After the True Lord *Glorified is He* talks about the sun, which is the instrument of illumination; He talks about the moon because it has a task that it carries out when the sun is absent. It is as if the moon has borrowed some of the

sun's light in order to lighten up the night for those who only work at night, such as patrol officers⁽¹⁾, security guards, bakery workers, etc. The moon, as you know, is not illuminated by itself, but rather, it reflects some of the sun's illumination. Thus, its illumination comes calmly, and that is why it is called the mild illumination; it does not send any rays or any heat.

That is why, when the True Lord *Glorified is He* enumerates some of His blessings and favours, He says, 'and among His wonders is your sleep, at night or in daytime, as well as your (ability to go about in) quest of some of His bounties...' (*ar-Rum*: 23).

If sleep was restricted to the night, then what would people, who have to work at night and rest and sleep in the daytime, do? Thus, this verse is an example of the Quran's precise style; it states that the night is the normal time for sleep and rest for most people, there is nothing preventing a minority, who work at night, from sleeping during the daytime.

The meaning of '...for which We have determined phases (which it must traverse)...' (*Ya Sin*: 39) is that we have determined the moon's trajectory in phases and distances. We witness these phases every month in the movement of the moon: the first lunar quarter, the second lunar quarter, and then a full moon. The moon is faster than the sun because it completes its orbit in a month while the sun completes its orbit in a year.

You may reflect on the Quran's precise performance that is based on high-level engineering in Allah's words: '...till it becomes like an old date-stalk, dried-up and curved' (*Ya Sin*: 39). This is a clarifying image of the moon's phases taken from the Arab environment. The 'date-stalk' is the translation for the Arabic word *'arjun* which is the cluster of the date palm that carries the fruits, and we call it *subata*. It is made from a number of thin stalks. However, its base, where it is attached to the trunk of the date palm, is broad and flattened. This cluster dries and becomes lean whenever it loses its green colour and it bends and tightens whenever its moisture dries up. This image perfectly explains the movement of the moon when it becomes lean and narrow until finally it disappears at the end of the month.

(1) *Al-'Asas* is the plural of *'as* which is the subject of the verb *'asa* (past) and *ya'assu* (present) which means to make the rounds at night in order to protect the people. See *Az-Zabidi in Taj Al-'Arus* under the entry on *'asasa*.

Here, the Quran compares the moon to an old date stalk. Some Arabs compare it to a nail clipping, such as an Arab poet who went out to observe the illumination of the moon until it disappeared and he crept to his beloved:

The light of the moon disappeared and I was watching it
Like nail clippings that had been cut off⁽¹⁾

It is appropriate to compare the high moon that we cannot fully perceive to something low that we can totally conceive; so we can say: 'that is like this' in order to make things clear.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* gathers the sun with the moon, and the night with the daytime:

لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنْبَغِي لَهَا أَنْ تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا اللَّيْلُ
سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

**The sun cannot overtake the moon, nor can
the night outrun the day: each floats in [its
own] orbit [40] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 40)**

It cannot be said that someone does not overtake another unless the latter is preceding the former. Likewise, the sun does not overtake the moon because, as we said before, the moon is faster than the sun because the former completes its orbit in a month while the latter completes its orbit in a year.

Likewise, '...nor can the night usurp the time of day...' (*Ya Sin*: 40); the night and the daytime represent the time resulting from the movement of the sun and the moon. The daytime is the son of the sun, while the night is the son of the moon. In this verse, there are two negations; the negation that the sun

(1) Mentioned by Ibn `Abd Al-Mun`im Al-Humairi in *Ar-Rawd Al-Mi`tar Fi Khabar Al-Aqtar in Ad-Diyarat Fi Wasf Diyar `Abdun*, and he attributed it to Ibn Al-Mu`taz from a poem that begins with:

The peninsula of trees and shade has been irrigated
And in the home of `Abdun it is pouring down with rain
Its wording is 'the light of the crescent disappeared' not 'the light of the moon disappeared'
and the verse is from the *Basit* metre.

overtakes and precedes the moon, and the negation that the night precedes the daytime. If the sun is not overtaking the moon, this does not mean that the night, the son of the moon, precedes the daytime, the son of the sun.

Therefore, you should not say that the night comes before the daytime because these cosmic signs are intended by the True Lord *Glorified is He*; when He talks about a matter that intellects cannot grasp, He uses imagery so that a rational person, who can think, study, examine and analyse styles, will grasp Allah's objective therein. The others who lack this capability pass by these matters and do not grasp any of it.

Regarding this cosmic matter, we say that, indeed, it is true that the moon precedes the sun, but the night does not precede the daytime. Consider how the style addresses this issue when Allah says: '...nor can the night usurp the time of day...' (*Ya Sin*: 40); Allah *Glorified is He* is not saying this unless there is someone who believes that the night usurps the day. Thus, He wanted to correct this belief of theirs and negated the possibility of the night usurping the daytime. This means that there is a precedent cause which is that the day does not usurp the night.

Thus, the conclusion is that the night does not usurp the daytime and the daytime does not usurp the night; that is the issue that they affirmed, Allah wanted to negate, and the issue that they negated, He kept it as it was.

But how did this understanding come to them? They said: they thought that the night preceded the daytime, because the day is affirmed by the night and not by the daytime. For example, in fasting the days of the month of *Ramadan*, the beginning of the day is affirmed by seeing the crescent of the month which is confirmed by sight at night. Since this was the case, they thought the night preceded the day. Therefore, they have a matter that is decided, which is that the day does not precede the night. This is not objected to by the Quran, which leaves it as it is. As for the matter that contradicts the cosmic sign, it is corrected for them: '...nor can the night usurp the time of day...' (*Ya Sin*: 40).

Then, we are facing a conundrum which says: 'The night does not precede the daytime and the daytime does not precede the night'. How? They said: 'If Allah had created the earth flat and facing the sun, then daytime would have

been first. Then, the sun would disappear and night would fall. On the other hand, had the earth been facing away from the sun, then night would have been first followed by the daytime'. However, the reality is that Allah *Glorified is He* created the earth in a spherical shape; thus, the night does not precede the daytime nor does the daytime precede the night because they were brought into existence together at the same moment. This is because the earth is round. The side that faces the sun experiences daytime, and when it turns away from the sun night falls. Thus, this verse has solved for us the long-disputed problem, which is the spherical nature of the earth.

His saying '...since all of them float through space (in accordance with Our laws).' (*Ya Sin*: 40) *Yasbahun* (Floating) is from the verb *sabah* (to swim), which is to cut a distance over smooth water, and it is a streamlined movement therein, not like the movement of feet on the ground. This is a similitude for the movement of orbits. This swimming movement is broken down into portions of time.

We do not have scales by which we can measure this movement. We only know it in terms of the sum of time along with the sum of movement. For example, if you had a child and you sat with him in order to observe and watch his growth, you would not notice this growth. A child never grows directly in the eyes of his father. Why? It is because the growth does not happen in one leap that would allow for it to be noticed. Rather, the growth is distributed over time. However, if you were absent from your child for several months or years, you would notice his growth upon returning and seeing him. This is because you are seeing the sum of growth that took place while you were away from him.

Thus, the meaning of '...since all of them float through space (in accordance with Our laws).' (*Ya Sin*: 40) is that they travel in a streamlined successive fashion that is distributed over time.

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

وَأَيُّهُمُ أَنَّا حَمَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ فِي الْفُلِّ الْمَشْحُونِ ﴿٤١﴾ وَخَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِنْ مِثْلِهِ مَا يَرْكَبُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾
وَلِنْ نَشَأْ نُغْرِقَهُمْ فَلَا صَرِيحَ لَهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْقَذُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَمَتَاعًا إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٤٤﴾

Another sign for them is that We carried their seed in the laden Ark, [41] and We have made similar things for them to ride in. [42] If We wished, We could drown them, and there would be no one to help them: they could not be saved. [43] Only by Our mercy could they be reprieved to enjoy life for a while [44] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 41- 44)

His saying ‘and (it ought to be) a sign for them...’ means it is a sign for us and for them. It is a sign for us to use it as proof to convince them. On the other hand, it is a sign calling them to believe in Allah. That is why ‘Ali *Allah be pleased with him* when he was asked ‘Do you know your Lord by Muhammad or Muhammad by you Lord?’ he said: ‘I know my Lord by my Lord, and Muhammad has come to inform me of what my Lord wants from me.’⁽¹⁾

The meaning of ‘... laden ships.’ (*Ya Sin*: 41) is the ark of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*. Allah revealed to Nuh (Noah) that he should build the ark and showed him how he should build it. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Thereupon We inspired him thus: “Build, under Our eyes and according to Our inspiration...”’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 27).

Ships themselves are signs of Allah because if Allah *Glorified is He* had not revealed to Nuh (Noah) to build the ark, how could we travel by water which is a majority of the earth’s surface? This is a sign that Allah brought about on the hand of Nuh (Noah) so that all of mankind would know how to build ships. Then, afterwards, intelligent people can develop them and enhance their construction, as we see nowadays with these ocean liners that are the latest of their kind. Sails were replaced with steam and electrical equipment, and iron and metal replaced wood and nails, and so forth.

Despite this development, and after dispensing with wind power for the propulsion of ships, ships still travel in the Name of Allah and by His Power,

(1) The story of the man who asked ‘Ali: ‘Did you recognize Muhammad through your Lord or did you recognize your Lord through Muhammad?’

even if steam or electricity is used. This is because 'wind' does not just mean the air that propels the ships but rather 'wind' refers to power, in whatever form it is. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and do not (allow yourselves to) be at variance with one another, lest you lose heart and your moral strength desert you...' (*al-Anfal*: 46).

As well, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'If He so wills, He stills the wind, and then they lie motionless on the sea's surface ...' (*ash-Shura*: 33).

There is something worth noting in the words: '...We bear their offspring (over the seas) in laden ships' (*Ya Sin*: 41); the verse is talking about the Arabs whom the Quran is primarily addressing. The ones who were carried in the ship are their fathers, not their offspring. How can this be?

The Quran says '...We bear their offspring...' meaning their fathers because the word *dhuriyyah* (offspring) can also mean the father because the children (*dharari*; plural of *dhuriyyah*) come from him. Or it is because those who were saved in the ship are the original source for those who are present and being addressed by the Quran. They were enclosed within their ancestors.

That is why we said previously that each of us, right up to the time that we are in now, contains a living part of our father Adam *peace be upon him* that has never died. If you traced my ancestors and traced my lineage you would say that I am from a living chromosome that came from my father, and my father was from a living chromosome that came from his father, and so forth until our father Adam. If this chromosome had been dead I would not have been here.

Therefore, within each of us is an original genetic particle from our father Adam *peace be upon him* that has never changed, and it is this particle that carries the natural disposition towards faith in every person.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* describes the ship as being laden, meaning full, because Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* did not only take aboard the believers in order to rescue them from drowning, but also to provide them with means of livelihood after being rescued. Otherwise, how could mankind live on earth with nothing else: no plants, no animals, and no birds?

That is why Allah *Glorified is He* addresses Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* saying: '...Place on board of this (ark) one pair of each (kind of animal) of

either sex...' (*Hud*: 40), 'and (that) We create for them things of a similar kind, on which they may embark (in their travels)' (*Ya Sin*: 42).

People took the ark as a model, and they built others like it and developed its construction. They have produced ships, vessels, boats and other things with which they can embark on the sea. Or the meaning is that we created for them vehicles or other creatures which resembled ships so that they could ride on land and in the deserts. For example, the camel is called the ship of the desert.

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* warns us against being deluded by these vessels on the basis that they are a means of rescue. If Allah *Glorified is He* wants to destroy something, He does. How many times have we seen ocean liners equipped with all the means of safety and protection, swallowed by the waves along with all those on board?

Allah *Glorified is He* speaks the truth in His saying: 'and (that,) if such be Our will, We may cause them to drown, with none to respond to their cry for help: and (then) they cannot be saved' (*Ya Sin*: 43). So, beware when you are given a blessing that saves you from destruction, that this blessing deludes you into thinking that you are safe and secure; you will never escape from Allah's Grasp. No one will save you and nothing will protect you, if He wills destruction for you. Do you hold something in your hand that will save you when a storm blows, or when a wave towers over your ship like a mountain? Therefore, your tools and your means will not save you from My power.

With '...none to respond to their cry for help...' (*Ya Sin*: 43), they will find none to save them when they cry out, looking for someone to help and get them out of whatever predicament they are in. A wonderful remark of faith that the people with illumination said is: 'Man cries out and seeks help from the one who is closest to him, like his father, his mother, his servant, his neighbour etc. If he does not find any of these people he says "O Allah!" That is why we hear some of them saying, when in a critical situation: "YHWH!" which means "O He!" (O Allah!) This is because there is no one else who can save or rescue but Allah'.

One of the subjects that include the theme of crying out is Allah's words regarding Satan: '...It is not for me to respond to your cries, nor for you to respond to mine...' (*Ibrahim*: 22); the 'responder to your cries' is the translation

of the Arabic word *musrikh* which is the one who puts an end to the crying out, which means that he helps you and relieves you of your distress.

Allah's saying, '...and (then) they cannot be saved' (*Ya Sin*: 43) means that that they are denied someone who will hear their call. They are also denied someone who will voluntarily rescue them. This is a cutting off of any hope that they will be saved. If Allah wills destruction, then there is absolutely no way for them to be saved, unless it is by Allah's permission and Mercy.

Allah says in the following verse: 'unless it be by an act of mercy from Us...' (*Ya Sin*: 44), i.e. an act of mercy that saves from drowning; the meaning of '...and a grant of life for a (further span of) time' (*Ya Sin*: 44) is that this saving is not a contract of permanent security and perpetual existence. This saving is only a grant of life until an appointed time, at which point death will come to you. You are, thus, saved from the fate of death so that the fate of death can come again, and there is no escaping it.

This is similar to what Fakhr Ar-Razi said in his poem:

If we were to die and find rest
Then death would be a comfort for every living thing
But when we die and we are resurrected
We will be asked afterwards about everything⁽¹⁾

The word 'time' means a period of time according to what it is being compared. For example, in the verse: 'Extol, then, Allah's Limitless Glory when you enter upon the evening hours, and when you rise at Morn' (*ar-Rum*: 17); *Heen* (when) means a day and a night. In the verse: '...yielding its fruit at all times...' (*Ibrahim*: 25), *hin* (at all times) means a year. And in the verse: 'Has there not been over Man a long period of time, when he was nothing - (not even) mentioned' (*al-Ma'arij*: 1), it means a defined amount of time.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

(1) These two verses are from `Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* from the *Wafir* metre, with a slight difference: 'find rest' (*istarahna*) is replaced with 'are left alone' (*turikna*). Al-Mubarrad has mentioned both in his *Al-Fadil Fi Al-Lugha Wal Adab*, in the chapter on the virtue of poetry.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ اتَّقُوا مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَمَا خَلْفَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

**Yet when they are told, ‘Beware of what lies
before and behind you, so that you may be given
mercy’ [45] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 45)**

You know that *idha* (when) is a conditional particle that indicates realization, while *inna* (if) indicates doubt. The meaning of ‘they are’ is the disbelievers, and then the verb ‘told’ is in the passive form to indicate generality; as if it is an obligation upon every believer to say, to advise and to take others by the hand onto Allah’s way.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* addresses the believers in this verse: ‘O My slaves! O you who have believed in Me and believed in My Messenger! Do not assume that I am pleased with you just because you have believed in Me and believed in My Messenger. Rather, I love to see you spare no effort in trying to rescue My creation from My anger towards them, when they persist in disbelief and remain in that state’.

This is a type of expectation that the believers will take the disbelievers by the hand and rescue them from the causes of Allah’s anger towards them. This meaning is included within the words of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*: ‘No one of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.’⁽¹⁾

The meaning of ‘...all that lies open before you...’ (*Ya Sin*: 45) is that which is in front of you, and that which awaits you, such as the resurrection, the gathering, the questioning and the reckoning and then the fire. And ‘...all that is hidden from you...’ (*Ya Sin*: 45) means those who came before you and were also deniers; what was the result of their disbelief? ‘...so that you might be graced with His Mercy...’ (*Ya Sin*: 45), i.e. is hoping that Allah may have mercy on you.

Therefore, every believer should be concerned with paving the way for the disbeliever to be shown mercy and to exert effort in trying to rescue him,

(1) ‘Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (13) and Muslim in his *Sahih* (45) in the Book of Faith from Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him with the wording: ‘By the One in whose hand in my soul, no slave truly believes until he loves for his neighbour (or he said, ‘for his brother’) what he loves for himself.’

and to show him compassion. He should not adopt a position of hostility and enmity towards them, which is of no benefit whatsoever.

وَمَا تَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ آيَةٍ مِّنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

**They ignore every single sign that comes to them
from their Lord [46] (The Quran, Ya Sin: 46)**

This is the very dispute and stubborn rejection because the signs are clearly in front of them. They are turning away from them and abandoning consideration of them. This is because those who disbelieve in Allah, deny His messengers, and reject Allah's way that has come to maintain soundness of His vicegerent on Earth, are the ones who benefit from corruption; they benefit from rejecting Allah's way, so it is only natural that they see in every messenger and in every rectifier, someone who has come to cut off their provision, to ruin their lives and to confront them and get in their face.

This verse is explained by what Allah says in another verse: 'and in their wickedness and self-exaltation they rejected them, although their minds were convinced of their truth...' (*an-Naml*: 14).

One may argue that if you are keen to get these disbelievers to have mercy from Allah, why do not you keep presenting new signs to them until they believe, and then Allah will show them mercy? We say: 'Whatever signs you bring, the result will be what the Quran has confirmed in the verse: "and no message of their Sustainer's messages ever reaches them without their turning away from it." (*Ya Sin*: 46)

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْطَعِمُ مَنْ لَوْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ أطعمه إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٤٧﴾

And when they are told, 'Give to others out of what God has provided for you,' the disbelievers say to the believers, 'Why should we feed those that God could feed if He wanted? You must be deeply misguided' [47] (The Quran, Ya Sin: 47)

This is another aspect of their stubborn rejection and turning truth into lie. When a sincere advisor says to them: '...spend on others out of what Allah has provided for you as sustenance...', i.e. from that which has Allah bestowed

you and made you the owner of it and it was not yours; their response is: ‘...Shall we feed anyone whom, if (your) Allah had so willed, He could have fed (Himself)...?’ This is how the disbeliever inverts the reality into falsehood and vaunts it.

‘...Shall we feed anyone whom, if (your) Allah had so willed, He could have fed (Himself)...?’ (*Ya Sin*: 47) means: ‘We are not miserly. In fact, we love to spend on others and carry out Allah’s orders, and He wants to withhold sustenance from these people. Then, how can we give them sustenance ourselves? If we spent on them we would be opposing and resisting the rulings of Allah; if He wants, He can feed them’.

Their stubborn opposition did not stop at this point, but rather, they persisted in their vaunt and accused the believers of being lost in error ‘Clearly, you’, meaning you are not ‘...but lost in error!’ How strange these people are! They accuse the believers of opposing Allah’s order by feeding those whom Allah has deprived from enough sustenance and, thus, committing an outrage against Him.

Indeed, the True Lord *Glorified is He* is the Lord of all, and He gives sustenance to all. He feeds us and quenches our thirst. However, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to see the compassion of His servants towards one another to facilitate their progression through life without hatred and without rancour. When the poor receive some goodness from the rich, the former will not despise or envy the latter envy him. Rather, the poor will hope for the blessing of the rich to perpetuate. The states of wealth and poverty are accidental; they come and go, and reality bears witness to this fact.

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾ مَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً تَأْخُذُهُمْ
وَهُمْ يَخِصِّمُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ تَوْصِيَةً وَلَا إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

And they say, ‘When will this promise be fulfilled, if what you say is true?’ [48] But all they are waiting for is a single blast that will overtake them while they are still arguing with each other [49] They will have no time to make bequests, nor will they have the chance to return to their own people [50] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 48 - 50)

Their asking: ‘When is this promise?’ refers to the promise of the Hereafter; the word *wa’d* (promise) indicates glad tidings, as opposed to the word *wa’eed* which

is a warning against evil. It is amazing that they are denying the promise, while it is for their benefit, and their prosperity lies in the *wa`d* and not in the *wa`eed*.

This questioning of theirs is actually a denial that there will be no Hereafter, reckoning or reward. The sane one among them acknowledges the Hereafter but says like the owner of the garden who said: 'And neither do I think that the Last Hour will ever come. But even if (it should come, and) I am brought before my Sustainer, I will surely find something even better than this as (my last) resort!' (*al-Kahf*: 36) If '...you are men of truth!' (*Ya Sin*: 48) in claiming that there is a resurrection and a reckoning, it is clear that their denial of the Resurrection bears connotations of challenge, stubbornness, and a hastening of the Resurrection. It is as though they are saying: 'Where is the Resurrection that you are talking about? Bring it about now if you are speaking the truth'. Moreover, they keep on this argument until the Resurrection descends upon them suddenly.

'And they are unaware that nothing awaits them beyond a single blast (of Allah's punishment), which will overtake them while they are still arguing (against resurrection)' (*Ya Sin*: 49); that is the Resurrection may strike them suddenly while they are having this argument. What could prevent such a thing since it is no more than a single blast from Allah that would overtake them and annihilate all of them?

This is an admonition for the heedless people who are heedless of the Resurrection, the Gathering, and the Reckoning. They are so preoccupied by this worldly life, with its trade, cultivation and its daily problems, such that they wasted their lives in taking and returning, arguing and debating until the Resurrection descends upon them suddenly. A poet said: 'You should not argue about something that was in your hand, and then someone else took it from you.'

My soul that owns things is fleeting

So how can I grieve over something that is fleeting?

The meaning of '...which will overtake them while they are still arguing (against resurrection)' (*Ya Sin*: 49) is that it will take them by surprise while they are arguing and debating. The meaning of 'arguing' is quarrelling; the word in Arabic *yakhissimun* is in a format used for the purpose of hyperbole. 'Overtaking' indicates severity as in the other verse saying: '...as only the Almighty, who determines all things, can take to task.' (*al-Qamar*: 42)

Allah's saying: 'and so (sudden will be their end that) no testament will they be able to make...' (*Ya Sin*: 50) means that the blast and the Resurrection will take them so suddenly that they will not be able to make their own testament. A *wasiya* (testament or will) is well known; it is when a person advises his wife and his children regarding what is important in their lives. For example, the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* when he was on his farewell pilgrimage and felt he was close to death, made his testament to the Muslims in his comprehensive sermon about the core of the religion and its foundation. Likewise, whoever is approaching their death and they sense their demise should advise their beloved ones regarding important matters.

Thus, these people, in this position, are not granted any time to advise one another '...nor to their own people will they return!' (*Ya Sin*: 50) They will not even be able to do this. Therefore, no one should find that they have to wait a long time for the resurrection because it comes suddenly. That is why Allah has hidden it. The date of resurrection is only known to Allah alone. It is in order that man constantly remembers it, and waits for it at every moment. The Resurrection in relation to man does not necessarily mean the Hereafter, but rather, it is when he dies that the Resurrection has been established in his regard. Once dead, man cannot take any action, repent or redress.

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

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَإِذَا هُمْ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَنْسِلُونَ ﴿٥١﴾
 قَالُوا يَنْوِيلُنَا مَنْ بَعَثَنَا مِنْ مَرْقَدِنَا هَذَا مَا وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَصَدَقَ الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾
 إِن كَانَتْ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ جَمِيعٌ لَّدَيْنَا مُحْضَرُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

The Trumpet will be sounded and – lo and behold! – they will rush out to their Lord from their graves [51] They will say, ‘Alas for us! Who has resurrected us from our resting places?’ [They will be told], ‘This is what the Lord of Mercy promised, and the messengers told the truth.’[52] It was just one single blast and then – lo and behold! – they were all brought before Us [53] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 51 - 53)

The words: ‘And (then) the trumpet (of resurrection) will be blown...’ refer to the horn that the angel Israfil will blow into; this is the blow of resurrection.

It is preceded by the blow of thunder (*sa`q*) that will kill them and subdue them. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: ‘...And then it will sound again – and lo! Standing (before the Seat of Judgment), they will begin to see (the truth)!’ (*az-Zumar*: 68)

If you said that it is one blow, then how can the first one kill and the second one revive? We say that the blow in the horn is nothing other than a sign of the event. As for the actual doer, it is Allah *Glorified is He*. He is the One Who kills with the first and revives with the second.

The meaning of ‘... out of their graves towards their Sustainer will they all rush forth!’ (*Ya Sin*: 51) is that they will hurry. ‘Rush forth’ is the translation of the Arabic word *yansilun* which originally means the unravelling of threads from one another. We say that a garment unravels, which means that its threads come out of place from the weft or the couch. That is why we say to a tailor: ‘*Kaffif* (Hem) the garment’, i.e. prevent unravelling by holding the threads together, and thus they do not slip away.

Thus, when they come out of the graves and see the reality that they frequently denied, they will say: ‘...Oh, woe unto us! Who has roused us from our sleep (of death) ...?’ (*Ya Sin*: 52) They are the ones speaking and declaring that they themselves are ruined and destroyed. No one is saying to them: ‘Woe unto you!’ Rather they are saying it about themselves. It is an expression of grief over what has escaped them. The meaning is: ‘Woe unto us! Come! This is your time because the matter is beyond our capacity. We cannot avoid it’. When man suddenly discovers his misjudgement, he turns on himself with reproach, or even he disciplines and punishes himself.

It is amazing that they are now saying: ‘...Who has roused us from our sleep (of death) ...?’ because they are acknowledging that death was only a period of sleep; after sleep one must wake up. At that point, Allah responds to them: ‘This’, i.e. what you are seeing of the Resurrection, ‘...is what the Most Gracious has promised! And His message-bearers spoke the truth!’ (*Ya Sin*: 52) It is also valid that the demonstrative ‘This’ refers to ‘...our sleep of death...’ in ‘...Who has roused us from our sleep of death?’ (*Ya Sin*: 52)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* has advised that He will gather mankind on a day in which there is no doubt, and whoever has escaped the punishments of

the life of this world and the agony of the life that they live, then he will have a punishment that is more severe. This is because those who first preached Islam in the very beginning were persecuted and harmed, some of them died in the course of their persecution before seeing the victory of Islam and the triumph of the Muslims, and before seeing Allah take revenge from His enemies. Then, Allah must show these believers the final outcome of the disbelievers and the punishment that befalls them.

There is a *wa'd* (promise) here even though it is an admonition of a calamity that is awaiting the disbelievers; but in relation to them, it is called a *wa'd* (promise) and not a *wa'eed* (threat). Why? Because being warned about a calamity before it happens is a great blessing, as in the saying of Allah in the chapter of *ar-Rahman*: 'A flash of fire will be let loose upon you, and smoke, and you will be left without succour! Which, then, of your Sustainer's powers can you disavow?' (*ar-Rahman*: 35-36)


Allah *the Exalted* made the fire and the flames to be from amongst Allah's blessings because with them, He causes people to have fear, and He warns them about the hell fire. He did not punish them with fire all of a sudden while they were healthy, hearing and seeing and able to return to Allah and repent to Him. They are in the time of respite and making amends; just as you would warn and threaten your child about failing if they neglect their studies. Thus, the threat here is the very blessing, and that is why it is called *wa'd* (promise) and not a *wa'eed* (threat).

The meaning of '...And His message-bearers spoke the truth!' (*Ya Sin*: 52) is that they conveyed it from Allah. 'Nothing will there have been...' (*Ya Sin*: 52), i.e. the blow was nothing 'but one single blast' and it will not be repeated because it is human acts that are repeated. If an action is repeated, it means that when it was done for the first time it was insufficient and did not fulfil its objective, but here the doer is Allah *Glorified is He*.

'Nothing will there have been but one single blast – and lo! Before Us will all of them be arraigned (and be told)' (*Ya Sin*: 53). The tone of this verse expresses the suddenness; once the blast takes place, they will all be arraigned despite them and without having a choice. The word *muhdar* (arraigned) is

the passive participle from the verb *ahdara* (brought, arraigned) which means to be forced to be present and appear before Allah to be reckoned.

In the previous verse ‘and (that) all of them, all together, will (in the end) before Us be arraigned?’ (*Ya Sin*: 32), the word *kull* (all) is added to indicate the generality of individuals. The generality of individuals could be in succession, one group following another; but here all the groups are gathered at the same time so that those who are the followers in this life will see those who are the leaders, and the misguided can see the one who misguided them, etc. That is why the day of judgement is called ‘*al-fadeeha*’ (the disclosing).


 فَأَيُّوْمَ لَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَلَا تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

**Today, no soul will be wronged in the least: you
 will only be repaid for your deeds [54]
 (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 54)**

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* is assuaging the people of faith and righteous action, meaning: do not be scared of the horror of the Resurrection because We do not oppress anyone, and reward from Us is in accordance with action. And ‘...nor shall you be requited for aught but what you were doing (on earth).’ (*Ya Sin*: 54) This verse is reassurance for those who do righteousness and it instils fear in those who do evil.

‘Today’ is the Day of Resurrection, and the scales on that day will be in the hand of the True Lord *Glorified is He*. This means that if you were in the life of this world, and the strong was oppressing the weak and you did not establish the scales with justice, then the scale on the Day of Resurrection will be a just scale; no one will be oppressed. This is because the one who will establish the scale is the True Lord *Glorified is He*: ‘...With whom will sovereignty rest on that Day? With Allah, the One who holds absolute sway over all that exists!’ (*Ghafir*: 16).

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us about the reward for the people of Paradise. He says:

إِنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ الْيَوْمَ فِي شُغْلٍ فَكِهِونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ هُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُمْ فِي ظِلَالٍ عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ
مُتَّكِئُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ لَهُمْ فِيهَا فَنَكِهَةٌ وَهُمْ مَا يَدْعُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ سَلَامٌ قَوْلًا مِنْ رَبِّ رَحِيمٍ ﴿٥٨﴾

The people of Paradise today are happily occupied [55] they and their spouses – seated on couches in the shade [56] There they have fruit and whatever they ask for[57] “Peace,” a word from the Lord of Mercy [58] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 55 - 58)

In the verse ‘Behold, those who are destined for paradise...’: the phrase ‘those who are destined’ is the translation of the Arabic word *sahib* which here means the one who you select and choose from amongst your species to accompany you and not to separate from you. It is as if paradise was personified and became a person who accompany other people and are accompanied by them. This is because paradise was in their thoughts and minds, and they were attached to it and preoccupied with it. Thus, they will have the companionship of paradise, and paradise will have their companionship. Whenever they set out to do goodness they remember paradise and they desire it, and whenever they set out to do evil they remember the fire and they flee from it. The other meaning of *sahib* is the owner of something, as if paradise belongs to them. They own it and they hold its keys because of the righteous actions that they have done.

The meaning of ‘Today...’ is the Day of Resurrection. ‘...in whatever they do.’ (*Ya Sin*: 55) It refers to the blessings that will preoccupy them from anything else; or it will preoccupy them from friends and relatives who will have entered the Fire; we seek refuge in Allah. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...and stand in awe of the Day on which no parent will be of any avail to his child, nor a child will in the least avail his parent...’ (*Luqman*: 33). Thus, they are in blessings that preoccupy them from all these people, as if they do not know them.

The words ‘has joy’ (*Ya Sin*: 55) are the translation for the Arabic word *fakihun*; There are two forms for the word: *fakih* and *fakiha*. *Fakih* (gleeful) means to be pleased and living in luxury. The word *fakiha* (fruit) is also derived from the same meaning which is something that is not essential, but rather for pleasure and luxury.

As for 'in happiness will they and their spouses on couches recline;' (*Ya Sin*: 56) I remember when I read this verse to some brothers, one of them hit himself on the chest, however he was a respected elder, violently and with agitation. He said: alas! So-and-so (his wife) will come to me again. He saw some bad traits in his wife which chased him away from her, and he was amazed that she would accompany him even in the Hereafter and paradise. We said to him: 'O Sheikh! You may hate certain things about your wife, but she has good actions that will make her worthy of paradise, and her righteous deeds will cancel out her evil actions with you. Maybe you were bad tempered or covetous; Allah *Glorified is He* says about married life: "And among His wonders is this: He creates for you mates out of your own kind, so that you might incline towards them, and He engenders love and tenderness between you..." (*ar-Rum*: 21).

The beginning of married life is characterized by harmony and rest such that spouses find comfort in one another and they enjoy being in each other's arms. Then, if the circumstances change and one of them abstains from the other, or one of them manifests qualities that push the other away, they should consider the love they have exchanged for some time. If they are afflicted with old age and incapacity, they, then, should show mercy to one another because of the tenderness and mercy that Allah has put between them. Married life in this state is a life of mutual compassion before anything else.

Moreover, this wife in whom you despise certain qualities, and whose behaviour puts you off, will not be the same person in the Hereafter. Rather, she will be a new person, as Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'and spouses pure' (*Al- 'Imran*: 15); thus, Allah will purify her from that which you were holding against her.

The meaning of 'in the shade' (*Ya Sin*: 56) is that there is no sun there, and no heat that could harm them. Shade is known and all people are familiar with it. In it, they take shelter from the sun's heat. In the Hereafter, there will be shades which the believers will enjoy with, or they will enjoy the shade of Allah as mentioned in a Noble Hadith: 'Allah will shade seven people in His shade on the day when there is no shade but His shade....'⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* (1021) from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him: 'Allah will shade seven people in His shade on the day when there is no shade but=

Al-'Ara'ik (Couches) is the plural of *'arika*, and it is a bed that has a curtained canopy⁽¹⁾ or it is a pillow that is reclined on. The meaning of 'recline' (*Ya Sin*: 56) is reclining is a position of the human being; he is either standing, sitting or reclining. Reclining is the most comfortable of these positions because the one standing stands up to do work, and the one sitting sits to think about something important, so he is not able to stand and work and he is not able to recline and relax. Thus, saying 'recline' means that they have complete relaxation.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...will there be for them...' (*Ya Sin*: 57), i.e. in Paradise '... (Only) delight...' (*Ya Sin*: 57). The word *fakiha* (delight) is from delight and pleasure. We know that the food that man eats is either for nourishment, and they are the essentials, or for pleasure and luxury. Here, the True Lord *Glorified is He* is only mentioning the luxuries because in paradise we only eat for the sake of pleasure and enjoyment not because of need or hunger.

And '...theirs shall be all that they could ask for.' (*Ya Sin*: 57), i.e. whatever they ask for and whatever occurs to them, they will find it in front of them. Some scholars said that 'all that they could ask for' means that Allah will not let them ask for anything because Allah *Glorified is He* will give to them before they ask.⁽²⁾

= *His shade: the righteous ruler, the youth who grew up worshipping Allah, the man whose heart is attached to the mosques, two men who love each other for Allah's sake and they meet for His sake and they part for His sake, a man who is invited (to commit adultery) by a woman of position and beauty and says "Indeed I fear God", a man who gives in charity and he conceals it such that his right hand does not know what his left hand gives, and a man whose eyes overflow with tears when he is alone and remembers Allah.'*

(1) *Al-Hajla* (curtained canopy) is like a dome according to the linguistic meaning. *Taj Al-'Arus* is a house that is decorated with cloth, beds, and curtains, and it has large tassels. See *Lisan Al-'Arab* under the entry *hajala*.

(2) In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi mentions a number of explanations regarding this phrase (8/5682):

- Whoever asks for something, it is given to him; so the meaning of 'what they ask for' is 'whatever they wish', and this is the position of Abu Ubayda
- Whoever claims something, then it is his.
- 'What they ask for': what they desire, and this is the position of Yahya ibn Salam
- 'What they ask for' (*yas'aluna*), and this is the position of Ibn 'Abbas.

Then Al-Qurtubi said: 'The meanings are close.'

After that the True Lord *Glorified is He* talks about an objective that He wanted for His creation in the life of this world to be a result of their travelling upon His way and His straight path. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'peace and fulfilment through the word of a Sustainer who dispenses all grace.' (*Ya Sin*: 58)

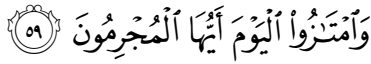
Thus, the fruit of Islam is that all of them submit their reins to the hand of their Creator and that they are brothers worshipping one deity and that they live in safety, tranquillity, and peace.

Therefore, safety and peace are the objective of Allah's way, and they are the completion of the blessing. Otherwise, if man was granted all blessings but lost safety and peace, then all his blessings would be made loathsome to him. He would have no calmness in life and enjoy no pleasure. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* favoured and reminded the tribe Quraysh of His favour in the holy verse saying: 'who has given them food against hunger, and made them safe from danger.' (*Quraysh*: 4)

Peace comes from you when you approach someone else and say, 'peace be upon you', meaning: 'I approach you in peace'. He, then responds to you: 'peace be upon you too'; the meaning is: 'I am not harming you and you are not harming me'. Everyone gives peace according to what they are capable of. If the peace is from Allah, then, it is absolute peace. It is peace that protects you from all sides and nothing will be able to penetrate and harm you.

The meaning of 'peace and fulfilment through the...' (*Ya Sin*: 58) is that greeting is said by Allah *Glorified is He*; it is not delivered through the angels. For example, He does not say to the angels: 'Give my greetings of peace to so-and-so'. The meaning is that peace is a greeting that is said by the Sustainer who dispenses all grace. It is not conveyed by anyone from Allah. The word 'Sustainer' has been chosen here to indicate that the Sustainer loves the one being sustained. So, what do you think about the Sustainer who is described with mercy: '...of a Sustainer who dispenses all grace.' (*Ya Sin*: 58)

After the True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us about the believers and the blessings that await them, he tells us about those who are lost in sin.



**But step aside today, you guilty ones [59]
(The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 59)**

The meaning of ‘But stand aside...’ is: ‘O you lost in sin! Separate yourselves from the believers and keep far away from them. Gather yourselves on one side so that you can see the believers enter paradise. Remain there so that you can increase in your grief’.

The Wisdom of Allah *Glorified is He* necessitated that the believers and the disbelievers be distinguished from one another meaning that each of them is clearly separated from the other. This is what happened in the expedition of Al-Hudaybiyyah, for when the Muslims were prevented from entering Mecca while being positioned on the city’s outlying hills, they became very sad, to such an extent that some of the most senior companions like 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* said to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*: ‘Why do we accept something disgraceful in our religion?’⁽¹⁾

The Muslims were about to go against the command of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* such that he said to his wife Umm Salama *Allah be pleased with her*: ‘The people are to be destroyed Umm Salama. I have commanded them and they have not obeyed.’ She said, ‘O Messenger of Allah. They are distressed, and this is because they have been prevented from entering the Sacred Mosque while being so close to it. This is a difficult matter for their souls to bear.’ She then advised the Messenger of Allah, saying, ‘O Messenger of Allah. Proceed with what Allah has commanded you and do it, and do not speak to anyone. Indeed, if they saw you determined

(1) *It is narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad (4/225) from the Hadith of Al-Masur ibn Makhrama and Marwan ibn Al-Hakam in a long Hadith of Al-Hudaybiyyah. It mentions that 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him when the Treaty of Al-Hudaybiyyah had been completed and nothing was left but the document, he jumped up and went to Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him and said: 'O Abu Bakr! Is he not the Messenger of Allah? Are we not Muslims? Are they not idolaters?' He said: 'Indeed.' He said: 'Then why were we being given humiliation in our religion?' Abu Bakr said: 'O 'Umar! Hang on to the leather stirrup wherever it is!' The Hadith is in its full length.*

they would submit.' The Messenger of Allah indeed took the advice of Umm Salama and the problem was solved.⁽¹⁾

Before they returned to Medina, Allah *Glorified is He* explained to them the wisdom and rationale behind the treaty of Al-Hudaybiyyah, and why Muhammad *peace be upon him* had accepted its conditions. The rationale was that amongst the disbelievers of Mecca, there were believers who were hiding their faith, and no one knew them. Had the Muslims entered Mecca at that time there would have been clashes between the two sides, and those believers who were hiding their faith would have been harmed and unable to openly declare it. Thus, innocent Muslim people would have been oppressed by either party.

That is why Allah *Glorified is He* said regarding this story in the chapter *al-Fath*: 'It was not for your enemies' sake that He stayed your hands from them: for it was they who were bent on denying the truth, and who debarred you from the Inviolable House of Worship and prevented your offering from reaching its destination. And had it not been for the believing men and believing women (in Mecca), whom you might have unwittingly trampled underfoot, and on whose account you might have become guilty, without knowing it, of a grievous wrong – (had it not been for this, you would have been allowed to fight your way into the city: but you were forbidden to fight) so that (in time) Allah might admit to His Grace whomever He wills. Had they (who deserve Our Mercy and they whom We have condemned) been clearly discernible (to you), We would indeed have imposed grievous suffering (at your hands) on such of them as were bent on denying the truth.' (*al-Fath*: 25)

(1) It is narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (4/225) from the Hadith of Al-Masur ibn Makhrama and Marwan ibn A-Hakam and it mentions that the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* said: 'O people! Slaughter an animal and cut your hair!' but no one did anything. Then he repeated it again and not a single man stood up. He repeated it a third time and again not a single man stood up. He, then, went back to Umm Salama and said: 'O Umm Salama! What is wrong with people?' She said: 'O Messenger of Allah! You have seen what has happened to them, so do not speak to any of them, and find your animal wherever it is. Slaughter your animal and cut your hair, for if you had done that the people would have done likewise. Thus, He went out and he didn't speak to anyone until his animal came. He slaughtered it and then sat and cut his hair. Thus, the people rose, slaughtered, and cut their hair until they were half-way between Mecca and Medina when the chapter *al-Fath* was revealed.

The meaning of ‘...Had they (who deserve Our mercy and they whom We have condemned) been clearly discernible (to you)...’ (*al-Fath*: 25) is: had the believers been distinguished from the disbelievers.

Or the meaning of ‘But stand aside today, O you who were lost in sin’ (*Ya Sin*: 59) is: Be distinguished by signs appropriate to your conditions, which are signs attached to you constantly so that your disgrace is not only in front of us now, but rather, you will have traits that you are known by. These signs are anger and blackness of the face; we seek refuge in Allah! In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* has said about the believers: ‘... (but) thou canst recognize them by their special mark...’ (*al-Baqara*: 273).

أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَبْنَىءَ آدَمَ أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ
عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَأَنْ أَعْبُدُونِي هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ﴿٦١﴾

**Children of Adam, did I not command you not to serve
Satan, for he was your sworn enemy [60] But to serve Me?
This is the straight path [61] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 60 - 61)**

It is as if someone was asking: ‘Do the disbelievers deserve all of this punishment and all of this anger from Allah?’ The True Lord responds: ‘Yes, they deserve it.’ This is because Allah has cautioned them and warned them, but they have not responded; thus, Allah says, ‘Did I not enjoin on you, O you children of Adam, that you should not worship Satan...’ (*Ya Sin*: 60)?

The True Lord *Glorified is He* did not take you in a state of inattentiveness, but rather, He cautioned you and explained to you Satan’s places of entrance and his tricks and artifices. This is because Satan, desperately, disclosed all his devices against the believers in front of Allah. Thus, Allah has warned us about them and explained to us his enmity towards us and his prior enmity towards Adam *peace be upon him* when Satan was commanded to prostrate to Adam but refused.

Satan’s affair did not end when he did not prostrate. Rather, he wanted to entice Adam and he wanted to take revenge from him and from his progeny after him. Indeed, he swore that he would do so in front of His Creator *Glorified is He* and he said, with the power of enticing, as the Quran relates: ‘...Then (I swear) by

Thy very Might: I shall most certainly beguile them all into grievous error – ...' (*Sad*: 82), but he remembered his true position as a slave of the True Lord, and said: '(all) save such of them as are truly Thy servants!' (*Sad*: 83) Satan says: 'I have no way of deceiving these people. That is the animosity is not between me and You, but rather, it is between me and the children of Adam'. Satan swore in a way that affirmed his ability to carry out what he was threatening. For example, Pharaoh's magicians swore saying: '...By Pharaoh's might, behold, it is we indeed who have prevailed!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 44)

As for Satan, he knows very well how to make an oath, for he said '...Then (I swear) by Thy very Might...' (*Sad*: 82) which means: 'By Your independence from your creation. Whoever wants to will believe and whoever wants to will disbelieve; this is the door which I will enter to get through to them. As for the one who desires you O Lord, I am unable to get close to him.

The meaning of 'Did I not enjoin on you...' (*Ya Sin*: 60) is: 'I have already commanded you', as Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And, indeed, long ago did We impose Our commandment on Adam; but he forgot it, and We found no firmness of purpose in him.' (*Ta Ha*: 115) That is Allah *Glorified is He* is saying: 'O Children of Adam! Did I not command you to beware of Satan's schemes, to be alert regarding his ways of getting through to you and his traps and intentions? Did he himself not say, "...I shall most certainly lie in ambush for them all along Thy straight way.'" (*al-A'raf*: 16)'? Then, since you have taken the protective serum (represented by Allah's warning and alerting you), you should have a necessary immunity with which to face this enemy, especially that he has unveiled his face and made clear his intention. He is waiting for you on the straight path and he exploits ways of obedience, not ways of disobedience, to spoil you. Satan does not come to the people of iniquity and the owners of taverns, but rather, he comes to the people of obedience to corrupt them. The poet was truthful who said about the one who is excessive in disobedience:

I was a person in the army of Satan and I was promoted

Because of my state until Satan came to be from my army⁽¹⁾

(1) This verse is mentioned in *Al-Mawsu'ah Ash-Shi'riyyah* from the poetry of two poets, the first of whom is Al-Khubz Arza (d.317 AH/969 AD) and his name is Nasr ibn Ahmad.=

The meaning of ‘...that you should not worship Satan...’ (*Ya Sin*: 60) is to worship Satan is to obey his insinuations and whisperings. The rationale not to worship him is: ‘...since, verily, he is your open foe.’ (*Ya Sin*: 60); he is an enemy who has openly declared his enmity, and he is familiar with the means of deceiving his enemies.

After our Lord *Glorified is He* forbids us from worshipping Satan, he directs us towards true worship: ‘and that you should worship Me (alone)? This would have been a straight way!’ (*Ya Sin*: 61) When we reflect on these two verses we find that the rationale behind forbidding the worship of Satan is ‘...since, verily, he is your open foe.’ Hence, the following verse should read: ‘and that you worship Me because I am your beloved’, as stated in the Qudsi Hadith: ‘O son of Adam! You are beloved to me, so My right over you is that you make Me beloved to you.’⁽¹⁾

However, the True Lord *Glorified is He* has not justified His being worshipped because of love, but rather, He is calling them to the straight path that benefits them and brings order to their lives. This is the basis for worshipping Allah. As for the matter of love, it indeed exists and I love you. However, whether I love or I do not love you, you should still follow this straight path because you will benefit from it. In this regard, the scholars have made a note on the following verses: ‘Guide us the straight way.’ (*al-Fatiha*: 6), ‘And that you should worship Me (alone). This would have been a straight way!’ (*Ya Sin*: 61) and ‘And (know) that this is the way leading straight unto Me: follow it’ (*al-An‘am*: 153).

They said that the straight path is the even path that has no crookedness in it. It represents the nearest path and the shortest distance between two points.

= He was originally from Basra and moved to Baghdad. His narrations have many channels. The text of the verse that he has is part of a poem from the *Tawil Metre* and it consists of 46 verses

I was a youth in the army of Satan (Iblis) and I was promoted
Because of my state until Satan (Iblis) came to be from my army
Al-Amir As-San‘ani (d.1182 AH/1768 AD) took this verse and said:
I was a youth in the army of Satan (Iblis) and I was promoted
Because of time until Satan (Iblis) came to be from my army
And it is from the *Tawil* metre from a poem that consists of 15 verses.

(1) Mentioned by Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali in *Ihya’ ‘Ulum Ad-Din* (4/296). He said: ‘In some books (meaning *Al-Ilahiyah*): ‘My slave. Your right over Me is that I love you, and My right over you is that you love Me.’

Whenever you hear the word 'path' you know that it has a beginning and an end, i.e. it starts from ...and ends to...; there is a subtle indication of which the believer should be aware. It is that the life of this world in relation to you is nothing other than a path along which you are travelling. It has a beginning and it has an end. Therefore, it is not an abode of establishment and permanent residence. Rather, it is a transit point.

When man resides in a place and he does not find repose therein, he leaves it for another place; had the first place been convenient for him, he would not have left it. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Behold, those whom the angels gather in death while they are still sinning against themselves, (the angels) will ask, "What was wrong with you?" They will answer: "We were too weak on Earth." (The angels) will ask, "Was, then, Allah's Earth not wide enough for you to forsake the domain of evil...?"' (*an-Nisa'*: 97)

This emigration also requires a path upon which I emigrate, from and to; so, it is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* is saying to you: 'In the life of this world, you are crossing a road to an end that is greater and nobler, so travel towards it along the nearest path that takes you to it. If you have seen with your own eyes the 'starting point' in this life, then indeed Allah *Glorified is He* has informed you of the 'destination' towards which you are travelling.

In this worldly life, you live according to the means that Allah has created, and are provided to you in the earth upon which you live, the water that you drink, the air that you breathe, the brain that you think with and so forth. However, it is your Lord who has provided you with these means, and He fears that you will be deluded by these means: 'Nay, verily, man becomes grossly overweening, whenever he believes himself to be self-sufficient.' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7)

That is why He makes these means differ sometimes so that you can be attached to the Causer *Glorified is He* to remain in a state of remembering Him, to keep praying to Him and seek refuge in Him. Allah *Glorified is He* loves to hear the supplications and voices of some people. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* may test these people so that they call upon Him in supplication. On the other hand, there are other people whom Allah *Glorified is He* hates to hear their call, so He commands the angels to fulfil their needs so that they do not call upon him regularly.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* narrated to us the history of Satan *may the curse of Allah be upon him* with the children of Adam. We must always bear these events in mind. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَقَدْ أَضَلَّ مِنْكُمْ جِبِلًّا كَثِيرًا أَفَلَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

He has led great numbers of you astray. Did you not use your reason? [62] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 62)

The Arabic word *jibbil* is used to describe the strongest and most powerful people. It is derived from the root *jabala* which indicates power, strength, establishment, and eminence. *Jabal*, the Arabic word for mountain, is used as such because it indicates their monumental establishment. We also say that a particular person was *jubila* (moulded) to have a particular character and behaviour which means that it is a deep-rooted quality established in their personality. We also describe a wise person as being a mountain because they are firm and unaffected by adverse events. Thus, there is a correlation in the meanings of all these words. In this regard, we can remind ourselves of the words of an Arab poet, who recited a eulogy in the funeral of one of the Caliphs as the people were carrying him to his grave.⁽¹⁾ The poet said: As if (you are) the Radwa Mountain, being moved by the hands of men.⁽²⁾ Radwa is a well-known mountain in the Arabian Peninsula.⁽³⁾

The meaning of Allah's words: 'And indeed, he (Satan) had led astray many of your strongest (*jibbil*) people, could you not, then, use your reason?' (*Ya Sin*: 62) is that you are not the first to be led astray by Satan. He has led many people astray before you, and indeed, they were stronger than you are. Indeed, he fooled them and made them a tool for misguidance. Thus, he did not just stop at misguiding them, but he made them misguide others. They became soldiers in his army, as we have previously mentioned.

(1) Al-Mutanabbi Ahmad ibn Al-Hussain Abu At-Tayyib (born in *Kufa* in 302 and died in 354 A.H.). He is one of the great figures of Arabic poetry. He claimed prophecy, but later retracted his claim. He was killed by a brigand called Fatik ibn Abu Jahl Al-Asadi.

(2) The full verse is as mentioned in *Al-Mawsu'ah Ash-Shi'riyyah*:

I never thought that I would see your coffin,

As if (you are) the Radwa Mountain, being moved by the hands of men

(3) Mount Radwa is an inaccessible mountain between Mecca and Medina. It is called the *Juhayna* Mountain, and is close to *Yanbu'*.

Modern civilization of the twentieth century, which is characterized with remarkable scientific invention and progress, still stands overwhelmed by the establishments of ancient civilizations. Indeed, modern scientists are incapable of comprehending all the ancients' secrets. At the head of these great and ancient civilizations was the civilization of the Pharaohs.

What did Satan do to Pharaoh? He enticed Pharaoh and led him astray, to such an extent that Pharaoh said to his people: 'I am your Lord All-Highest.' (*an-Nazi'at*: 24) The Quran describes Pharaoh in the following verse: 'Thus, he (condescendingly) incited his people to levity, and they obeyed him: for, behold, they were immoral people' (*az-Zukhruf*: 54). Thus, many strong individuals, like Pharaoh, could not confront Satan or save themselves from his schemes. Satan swayed by using their impulsive passions. He made obedience difficult for them and pulled them towards waywardness.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* reprimands these disobedient people: 'Could you not, then, use your reason?' (*Ya Sin*: 62) Where were their intellects when they lined up behind him, after Allah *Glorified is He* had warned them from his plots and ploys? Allah *Glorified is He* commands us to use our reasoning and intellect because the result of using our minds in contemplating Allah's signs in the universe leads us to understanding of what he wants from us.

Generally, you would not command someone to use their intellect unless you were confident that the results would be in accordance with what you wanted from them. For example, let us consider an honest merchant who is selling a good commodity. Such merchants may eagerly invite you to examine the quality of their merchandise carefully. A wool merchant, for example, might light a match and burn a thread from its fabric to affirm its superior texture. He would not do that if he was not confident of his products' value. This merchant's confidence will easily convince you of the product's excellence and will make you more eager to buy it. However, if the merchant was a fraudster, he will try to convince you with speculative talk that is packed with lies and deceit. He may even distract you from examining the product carefully because the result will not be for their benefit.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Could you not, then, use your reason?' (*Ya Sin*: 62) to emphasize the truth of this message. If you use your own

reasonable minds, you will be certainly convinced of its certainty. This meant that if the disbelievers had used their intellects, they would have understood the truth and chosen its straight path, Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

هَٰذِهِ جَهَنَّمُ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ أَصْلَوْهَا الْيَوْمَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾
 الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَىٰ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ أَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

So this is the Fire that you were warned against [63] Enter it today, because you went on ignoring [my commands] [64] On that Day We shall seal up their mouths, but their hands will speak to Us, and their feet bear witness to everything they have done [65] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 63 - 65)

Here too, Allah *Glorified is He* warns us from the hell-fire by using a lexical promise (*wa`d*) instead of using a lexical threat (*wa`eed*). We already know that, lexically, the Arabic word *wa`d* (promise) is used to refer to the good forthcoming events and the word *wa`eed* (ominous threat) is used to refer to the coming punishments. In this regard, an Arab poet⁽¹⁾ once said:

O time! You have surely fulfilled your threats (*wa`eed*),
 and broken your hopeful promises (*wa`d*)!⁽²⁾

However, if you are warned against a calamity before it actually befalls you, this warning is not actually an ominous threat. Allah's words regarding the hell-fire, despite being a threat, cannot hide the caring nature of His Lordship. His divine warning was issued so that the disbelievers will rectify their ways and correct their mistakes before the real punishment occurs. This is the reason why Allah *Glorified is He* referred to His threats of punishment as a *wa`d* (promise) instead of a *wa`eed* (ominous threat).

Allah *Glorified is He* also tells the disbelievers who will enter the hell-fire: 'Burn in it (*islawha*)' (*Ya Sin*: 64). The word *islawha* combines the meanings

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- (1) Abu Al-'Ala' Al-Ma'ri. He was a poet and a philosopher, born in 449 A.H. and died in his birthplace in Ma'rat An-Nu'man. He went blind at the age of four, and began composing poetry at the age of 11. He used to wear coarse clothing and he did not eat meat for 45 years.
 (2) The verse is from the poem of Abu Al-'Ala' Al-Ma'ri from the *Saree`* poetic metre and it consists of 10 verses.

of the sentence, 'Enter the hell-fire and be burned by its flames'. The word 'today' (*Ya Sin*: 64) refers to the Day of Judgment in which they will meet their recompense and reckoning.

On their day of punishment, the days of their sinful pleasures in the former world will have passed. They will recognize that their past worldly pleasures brought them to the punishment of an eternal hell-Fire. On that day, the pleasures will have gone, but their consequent punishment in the fire will remain as an outcome of their: '...persistent denial of the truth' (*Ya Sin*: 64). Indeed, their punishment in this fire is not an oppressive injustice, but rather, is a just recompense for their continuous denial of Allah's blessings.

Some people may receive your generosity and bounties with insults and miserliness towards you. If you choose to punish such people later, they may find it easier to tolerate any physical punishment, rather than meet or confront their benefactor. This is because the sense of a person's shame may exceed the severity of any physical punishment they may have to endure.

Due to that, during the physical punishment of the disbelievers in the fire, they will be told: 'Burn in it (*islawha*) today as an outcome of your persistent denial of the truth!' Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* will remind these disbelievers that the physical fiery punishment is only a direct result of their denial of His blessings. At that point, their feelings of shame will, indeed, be more severe than the physical pain of the fire.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* described this future punishment, and we seek refuge in Allah *Glorified is He* from this destiny. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'On that Day, We shall set a seal on their mouths, but their hands will speak to Us, and their feet will bear witness to whatever they have earned (in their lives).' (*Ya Sin*: 65) His saying 'On that Day...' (*Ya Sin*: 65) is a reference to the Day of Resurrection, when we will all be assembled and gathered to meet our Creator. The words: 'We shall set a seal on their mouths' (*Ya Sin*: 65) mean that Allah will stop their mouths from speaking.

In this world, these disbelievers had shown pride and denial, and thus, Allah *Glorified is He* had sealed their hearts from further messages of guidance. Thus, faith did not enter their hearts and disbelief was rooted in them.

Similarly, in the future of the Hereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* will seal their mouths, and prevent them from issuing empty apologies or pleas for forgiveness. This is because the Hereafter is a place of reckoning and reward and not an abode of actions. Therefore, the disbelievers' search for forgiveness will be futile and their pleas will have no benefit in the Last Day. The times for speech and woven articulations will end in this world, and the tongue will have no role after Resurrection. The mouths will be closed and the tongues will be tied, so that the limbs can speak freely about their previous lives.

Consider the following words: '...but their hands will speak to Us, and their feet will bear witness to what they have earned (in their lives)' (*Ya Sin*: 65). Allah *Glorified is He* does not say that He will make the hands and feet bear witness to their actions by force. On the contrary, their hands will speak and their feet will bear witness voluntarily.

These limbs will volunteer to testify to the person's actions, even though these were the same limbs that carried out the sins in the life of this world. They will not bear witness against themselves, but rather, they will bear witness against the conscious soul to which Allah *Glorified is He* had subjugated them to act. Allah *Glorified is He* had commanded them to do as the soul desired, and they were subject to its instructions in the life of this world. Then, in the Hereafter, these limbs will be freed from following the conscious soul. Indeed, the absolute sovereignty and authority belongs to Allah *Glorified is He* alone. Thus, the limbs will speak as they want, and will bear witness in front of the Lord *the Most High*.

We previously gave an example of this matter. If an army squadron is sent by the supreme commander for a particular mission, the squadron has to obey the orders of its immediate commander, even if the orders are wrong. Then, when it returns to the supreme commander, it is given a chance to complain about the immediate commander's mistakes. Likewise, the limbs will witness to their soul's commands on the Day of Resurrection.

Some people asked, 'Why will the hands speak while the legs only bear witness to the person's actions'? It is because the multitude of a person's actions is usually attributed to the hands, even if walking is the means of the action. As the hands speak about their individual's actions, they will be making a

claim that needs a witness. Therefore, the feet will corroborate the hand's testimonial and bear witness to it.

Some people asked, 'How can the hands speak'? The One Creator, Allah *Glorified is He* who made the tongue speak, when it is only a mere piece of flesh and blood, is able to make all the other organs speak as well. As long as the action is willed by Allah *Glorified is He* there is no need to ask about the Creator's methods. Furthermore, we can already see in this world, that the hands can perform movements as fine as the organs of speech.

Allah *Glorified is He* then said that these testimonies will narrate: '...what they have earned (*kasaba*) (in their lives)' (*Ya Sin*: 65). He did not say '...what they did in their lives'. What is the difference between earnings and actions? Generally, there are two types of disobedience. Firstly, there are misdeeds that a sinner perceives as joyful earnings. This is when a sinner feels delight in committing the sin. They may even talk nonchalantly about these sins with other people and boast about committing them. On the other hand, there are people who commit acts of disobedience with shame. They blame themselves for these sins and constantly seek repentance from them.

In this verse, the word *kasaba* is being used in its most basic linguistic form. In this form, it is defined as the process in which a person makes a profit from buying or selling goods. Thus, the word describes a normal and traditional transaction in which people accomplish earnings without burden or fraud. In this form, the word *kasaba* can also be used to refer to the lawful acts of righteousness.

On the other hand, there is another form of the word when we add a *hamza* to it. The resultant word, *iktasaba*, indicates the earning of unnatural profits that are burdened with fraud. This form of the word can be used to describe the joyful sins we talked about.

When a man does acts of righteousness, they come to him naturally and spontaneously. However, when he commits unlawful actions, he must execute more effort to carry them out stealthily. This is because goodness is simple, gentle and pleasing, whereas evil is tiresome and difficult. For example, a man can sit with his wife and daughters without any burden or difficulty because it is a natural and acceptable occurrence. However, if he sits with a woman he is

forbidden from looking at, he may unlawfully and stealthily steal his glances so that no one can be aware of his shortcomings. Therefore, the word *kasaba* indicates the earnings of a natural profit, whereas the word *iktasaba* indicates an unlawful and unnatural earning.

Now, in this verse, why did Allah *Glorified is He* use the word *kasaba* when referring to the sins of the disbelievers? This is because people who regularly engage in unnatural sins become used to these acts of disobedience and assimilate these sins in their habits. At that point, they start committing these sins naturally without feeling any shame, and may even declare them openly. So, for this malevolent person, the act of *iktisab* (unnatural earning) has become an act of *kasb* (natural earning). Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says in this verse: ‘...and their feet will bear witness to what they have earned (*kasaba*) (in life)’ (*Ya Sin*: 65).

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَطَمَسْنَا عَلَىٰ أَعْيُنِهِمْ فَاسْتَبَقُوا الصِّرَاطَ فَأَنَّى يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

If it had been Our will, We could have taken away their sight. They would have struggled to find the way, but how could they have seen it? [66] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 66)

Allah *Glorified is He* will seal their mouths and prevent them from speaking, and if Allah wants, He could also blot out their eyes by locking them shut and flattening them with no trace. If Allah *Glorified is He* blots out their eyes, they will lose their sights, so how will they guide themselves while they are racing for the straight path of the *sirat* to reach paradise?

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَمَسَخْنَاهُمْ عَلَىٰ مَكَانَتِهِمْ فَمَا اسْتَطَعُوا مُضِيًّا وَلَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

If it had been Our will, We could have paralysed them where they stood, so that they could not move forward or backward [67] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 67)

Someone might say, ‘If they lose their sight on the *sirat*, they could have alternatives and devices to help guide them. Maybe, they could feel

the path with a stick, for example, or someone could hold their hand and guide them through it’.

This will not be the case because Allah *Glorified is He* will encompass them from all sides, and will cut off all their hopes of salvation. Thus, the matter does not end with their eyes being blotted out. There is an outcome that is more severe which is that Allah *Glorified is He* can paralyze them in their places.

The word *masakhnahum* is derived from the Arabic word *maskh* which may refer to the transformation of a body into a statue-like structure that does not move. It could also indicate that they may be transformed into hideous forms, in order to degrade and humiliate them.

The first meaning is more valid ⁽¹⁾ because Allah *Glorified is He* says afterwards: ‘Then, in no way could they move forward or turn back’ (*Ya Sin*: 67). This means that they will be fixed in their places while being unable to move in any direction. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَنْ نُعَمِّرْهُ نُنَكِّسْهُ فِي الْخَلْقِ أَفَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾

**If We extend anyone’s life, We reverse his
development. Do they not use their reason? [68]
(The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 68)**

Allah *Glorified is He* clearly warns them in this world. He tells them: ‘Do not worship Satan’! He made Satan’s enmity clear to them. He also says, ‘Worship me and travel along My straight path’. Therefore, they do not have any excuses if they choose to disbelieve in Allah *Glorified is He* and obey Satan or worship him.

However, some of them may excuse themselves from another perspective. Some of these disbelievers might say, ‘O our Lord! If we had lived longer

(1) This is the position of Al-Hasan Al-Basri. He said, ‘This means “We could restrain them so that they are unable to move, either forwards or go back to where they came from, just like an inanimate object that does not move forwards or backwards.”’ As for the second meaning of the word *al-maskh* which indicates the transformation of a constitution, some scholars said that they may transformed into beasts of burden or other creatures. This was the position of As-Suddi, as has been mentioned by Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir* (3/578).

lives, we would have been guided and returned to the straight path'. Allah responds to them in another verse: 'And did We not give you a long (life), enough to remind anyone who would remind himself? And the constant warner came to you.' (*Fatir*: 37)

Allah *Glorified is He* allows them to live a long life which was enough for anyone to think and go back to Allah's righteous path. However, these disbelievers did not go back. Indeed, a long life makes one weak and feeble, and lacking the ability to move properly. In the beginning of your life, you possess youth and strength. You will be active, in body and mind. However, with old age, you will become weak in your physical constitution as your muscular and mental strength gradually decrease. Then, man returns to the weakness that he began with as a young child.

Allah *Glorified is He* describes man in the later senile stage in life by the following words: 'And of you is he who will be turned back to the most decrepit age, ceasing to know anything of what he once knew so well.' (*an-Nahl*: 70)

Therefore, if you do not return to Allah's path and take heed when you have physical strength and intellectual soundness, are you going to return when you are senile, weak, and forgetful? That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: 'And (let them know that) to whomever We give a long life, We also cause him to decline (*nunakis-hu*) in his body' (*Ya Sin*: 67). *Al-Intikas* means the return to the formal and primitive constitution. Thus, prolonging the life of a man will take him back to his childhood phase. It is a relapse for him when he becomes a senile old man who cannot move or speak. His memory will become weak and he will include a lot of drivel in his speech. He will resemble a child who needs someone to carry him, feed him, and remove harm from his way. Is he going to return to Allah's path in this state? Would it benefit him to think and reflect at that stage of his life?

'Will they not, then, use their reason?' (*Ya Sin*: 68) Allah *Glorified is He* states this verse in the form of a question. He does not merely state it as fact because if they answer this question, they will confirm against themselves that they lack proper minds.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَا عَلَّمْنَاهُ الشِّعْرَ وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لَهُ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ وَقُرْآنٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٦٩﴾
لِيُنذِرَ مَنْ كَانَ حَيًّا وَيَحِقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٧٠﴾

We have not taught the Prophet poetry, nor could he ever have been a poet [69] This is a revelation, an illuminating Quran to warn anyone who is truly alive, so that God's verdict may be passed against the disbelievers [70]
(The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 69 - 70)

In this verse, there is an apparent shift from the context of the previous verses. What is the connection between the Hereafter's punishment to the disbelievers and Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him*?

We know that the foundational principle of religion is monotheism, which involves accepting the Oneness of Allah. The meaning of Allah's Oneness is that you should bear witness that He is the Only (*Wahid*) and the One (*Ahad*) Deity in Existence. Each of the words, *Wahid* and *Ahad*, has its exclusive meaning, and each of their descriptions also affirms the other attribute.

The meaning of the word *Wahid* (The Only Deity) means that there is no other deity with Him in existence. On the other hand, the word *Ahad* (The One) means that He only has One Essence *Glorified is He*. This means that He is not comprised of constituent parts, and that He is not made from a number of things put together. His Essence does not rely on anything else *Glorified is He*.

For example, if you have one chair, the chair can be described as the only chair you have (*wahid*). However, it is not a single entity (*ahad*) because it has been made from a number of things, such as wood, nails, glue, as well as paint. Thus, it is a *wahid* but is not an *ahad*. As for Allah *Glorified is He* He must be described simultaneously with both descriptions. Thus, we say that He is '*Al-Wahid Al-Ahad*', because each of them has a distinct meaning.

The matter of Allah's Oneness is built on a rational argument. Allah *Glorified is He* has declared that He is the True and Only Deity, and that He has no partners. He is the sole Creator and Provider, and He alone is the One who deserves to be worshipped. No other deities exist that oppose this claim. Logically, the claim can be affirmed for the one who made it until someone

else makes an opposing argument. We have not seen anyone claim to be the sole Creator except Allah *Glorified is He*.

If Allah *Glorified is He* had any other partners with Him, where are they? Why did they not demand their rights in divinity? Are they quiet about it or have they not become aware of it? In any of these cases, it is not valid for them to be gods. That is why the Quran has already discussed this matter with a logical argument: ‘Say, “If there had been (other) gods with Him as they (the polytheist idolaters) claim, lo, indeed they would have constantly sought a way to The Owner of the Throne.”’ (*al-Isra*: 42)

Therefore, believing in Allah’s oneness is the basic foundation of religion. However, human beings do not know naturally what Allah *Glorified is He* wants from them by natural intellect. A messenger must be sent to inform them about their obligations. Therefore, there must be a messenger. This is the second principle of religion.

When Allah *Glorified is He* the Absolute and Perfect Power, addresses His imperfect creation, there must be a medium that enables the message to be delivered from His Absolute Perfection to those who are less than perfect. Thus, the matter was gradated as Allah *Glorified is He* addressed the angels, the angels addressed the messengers, and the messengers addressed mankind.

Therefore, believing in the concept of a message is the second objective of religion. The messenger is the medium between the Creator and the creation. The messenger does not merely convey the commandments, but is also an exemplar of conduct and application. Allah *Glorified is He* describes Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* in the following verse: ‘Verily, in the Apostle of Allah you have a good example.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 21) If the messenger had been an angel, he would not have been able to fulfil the role of an exemplar. A messenger can only carry out his duties if he is from the same species as those to whom he is being sent. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies this matter by saying: ‘Yet, whenever (Allah’s) guidance came to them (through a prophet,) nothing prevented mankind from believing as the guidance came to them, except that they said, “Has Allah sent forth a mortal being as a Messenger?”’ (*al-Isra*: 94). Allah *Glorified is He* ordered Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* to refute their argument by

saying: 'If angels were walking about on earth as their natural abode, We would indeed have sent down unto them an angel from the heaven as Our apostle.' (*al-Isra'*: 95)

If an angel had been sent down in its natural luminous form, human beings would not have been able to see it. It would have to come to them in the form of a human being, and their suspicions would still remain intact. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And (even) if We had appointed an angel as Our message-bearer, We would certainly have made him (appear as) a man – and thus We would only have confounded them in the same way as they are now confusing themselves.' (*al-An'am*: 9) Therefore, there must be a means to convey the message that resembles an electrical transformer which transforms electricity from the stronger power supply to a weaker instrument without burning it.

The third principle of religion is that people will be gathered to a final day of reckoning. This is because the Message came to convey certain commandments and prohibitions. Some people will obey these commandments and refrain from the forbidden prohibitions. Other people will abandon these commandments, or indeed go against it. Therefore, there must be a point of final return, in which the obedient people are rewarded and the transgressors are punished.

Allah *Glorified is He* talks about monotheism in the following verse: 'Did I not instruct you, O you descendants of Adam, that you should not worship Satan, as surely he is an evident enemy for you, and that you should worship Me (alone)? This is a straight way.' (*Ya Sin*: 60-61)

Allah *Glorified is He* also informed us that He will assemble people on the Day of Reckoning when He: 'This, then, is the hell-fire of which you were repeatedly warned. Burn in it today as an outcome of your persistent denial of the truth.' (*Ya Sin*: 63-64)

Allah *Glorified is He* also describes the principle of revelation, when He talks about Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him*: 'And in no way did We teach him (Prophet Muhammad) poetry; and in no way would poetry have suited him.' (*Ya Sin*: 69) Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* was not taught poetry by Allah or even by the society and the environment in which he lived. Thus, it was an honour for Allah's Messenger to be unlettered because if he had been literate, his refined teachings would

have been attributed to his environment. In actuality, his refinement and his knowledge were from Allah *Glorified is He*.

Therefore, it is an honour for Prophet Muhammad's *ummah* that he was unlettered. If his *ummah* had prior treasures of human knowledge, the events that later happened on the Arabian Peninsula would have only been described as a leap of civilization. For instance, when Allah *Glorified is He* gave us victory in the War of *Ramadan*, some people still said, 'It was a victory for our civilization'.

Allah *Glorified is He* affirmed that the source of this knowledge was divine: 'And in no way did We teach him (Prophet Muhammad) poetry' (*Ya Sin*: 69). Prophet Muhammad's revelation was only taught by his Lord, Allah *Glorified is He*.

Poetry needs a linguistic culture and knowledge of measures and rhymes. One must have fine taste, a musical ear, and other tools that poets need. Some people may assume that Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* did not say poetry because he did not possess these tools. Allah *Glorified is He* refuted this conjecture: 'And in no way would poetry have suited him' (*Ya Sin*: 69).

This means that Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* did not lack the abilities necessary for a poet. Indeed, had he wanted to say poetry, he would have said the best of its verses. However, his message was not suited for poetry. This was because the mission of a messenger is different from the mission of a poet. Most poetry contains lies and descriptions of sin, and when it entails goodness, it becomes weak and soft. This is because poetry is a craft of weaving fantasy, and a poet could say whatever pleases him irrespective of the objectives. That is why they say that the most pleasant of poetry is the most untruthful.

We often see poets who have sublime values and morals finding it difficult to combine between their faith and their gifts of poetry. They have no choice but to restrict themselves to the verses of virtue, and have to keep their distance from the poetry of ridicule and seduction.

An Arab poet from *Mahjar* was known for piety and righteousness. He once tried to combine between his piety and the gift of poetry that he had. He said:

My Lord (Allah), indeed I have disobeyed you on purpose,

But I know that you are the most beautiful in forgiveness.

Indeed, I have committed the greatest of sins,

As I did not want your forgiveness to be limited

Thus, he did well in the first verse, but was not successful in illustrating the second verse appropriately.

Hasan ibn Thabit *Allah be pleased with him* was a proficient poet before Islam. When he embraced Islam, they said to him, 'Your poetry has become soft, O Abu Al-Hussam!' He responded, 'Poetry is laborious and is strengthened by sin.⁽¹⁾ If it contains goodness, it becomes weak and soft.'

Thus, Allah's saying: 'And in no way would poetry have suited him' (*Ya Sin*: 69) was revealed to defend Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* from the accusation that he does not have a fine sense, or that his ear was not musical. How can the one who is taught by Allah *Glorified is He* be accused of this, when his ear receives revelation directly?

Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* once recited a particular verse of poetry without following its poetic measure. Thus when he recited⁽²⁾, 'The days will reveal what you had been ignorant about, and your carrier of news will not need payment,' he changed the wording into, 'And the one you have not paid will carry the news to you.'⁽³⁾

(1) *Ibn Qutaiba Ad-Dinawari, in Ash-Shi'r Wa Ash-Shu'ara', mentioned this remarks from the sayings of Al-Asma'i. He then mentioned Hassan ibn Thabit and said, 'This was Hassan ibn Thabit who was an outstanding poet before Islam. Then, when Islam came, his poetry came to an end.'*

(2) 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* was once asked, 'Did the Prophet ever quote any poetry?' She said, 'He used to quote the poetry of Ibn Ruwaha, and quoted poet who said, 'And your carrier of news will not need payment.' This was narrated by At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (2848) and Ahmad in his *Musnad* (6/151).

(3) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to quote this verse, but he did not follow the original poetic measure. The verse is by Tarfa ibn Al-'Abd. Abu Ubayd said in *Al-Amthal*, 'We have related in a Hadith marfu' (traceable in ascending order back to Prophet Muhammad) that he quoted a verse that said: 'And he will come to you the one who has not been paid with bits of news.'

It is also related that Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* said⁽¹⁾, ‘The most truthful words of poetry were said by Labeed: ‘Indeed everything besides Allah is falsehood, and every joy comes to an end without doubt.’ The original wording of this verse was: ‘Indeed everything besides Allah is falsehood, and every joy, without doubt, comes to an end.’

Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* used to break the poetic measure of the verse so that it could not be said that he recited poetry. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And in no way did We teach him (Prophet Muhammad) poetry; and in no way would poetry have suited him.’ (*Ya Sin*: 69) However, Allah *Glorified is He* did not forbid Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* from reciting it. The Prophet was only cautious regarding this matter.

Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* did not recite the poetry of other poets exactly as they said it. As for him formulating verses of poetry by himself, some scholars are of the opinion that He said a verse of poetry in the Battle of Hunayn⁽²⁾. He is narrated to have said, ‘I am the Prophet, without a lie. I am the son of `Abd Al-Muttalib.’

This Prophetic saying did comply with a poetic measure that is known as *rajaz*. However, this is only a saying that coincidentally fitted a poetic measure. There is a difference between complete excerpts of speech that are regulated and subjected to a poetic measure and rhyme, and a single sentence of speech that coincidentally fits a measure without intention.

In fact, there are distinct verses in the Quran itself that coincidentally fit a poetic measure. We still do not say that they are verses of poetry. For

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (6147) and Muslim in his *Sahih* (3256) in the *Book of Poetry* (Hadiths 2-6) from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him.

(2) Narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* (1776) in the *Book of Jihad* and Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (3217) from the Hadith of Al-Bara` ibn `Azib, which is that a man asked him: ‘Did you flee from Allah’s Messenger on the day of Hunayn?’ Al-Bara` said: ‘Allah’s Messenger did not flee. On that day, Hawazin took part in the battle as archers. When we attacked them, they retreated and we fell upon the spoils. They advanced towards us with arrows. I then saw Prophet Muhammad on his white mule and Abu Sufyan ibn Al-Harith was holding its bridle. He was saying: “I am the Prophet, without a lie. I am the son of `Abd Al-Muttalib.”’

example, Allah *Glorified is He* says, '(But as for you, O believers,) never shall you attain to true piety unless you spend on others out of what you cherish yourselves.' (*Al-Imran*: 92)

Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: 'This, then, is he about whom you have been blaming me.' (*Yusuf*: 32) He also says, 'Tell My servants that I alone am truly forgiving, and the True Giver of grace' (*al-Hijr*: 49).

These verses coincidentally fit a poetic measure, but they are not called poetry because poetry is a measured saying that is intentionally rhymed.

The disbelievers accused Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* of being a magician and a poet. They also claimed that he was a fortune-teller. The Quran refuted their claims regarding poetry: 'And in no way did We teach him poetry; and in no way would poetry have suited him.' (*Ya Sin*: 69)

On the other hand, the Quran did not negate the claim of magic. This is because the Quran has a sublime style of argumentation. The closest thing to the Quranic verses is poetry, and this is why the Quran negated the claim that Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* was a poet. Magic, on the other hand, involves the usage of cryptic characters and meaningless speech. Therefore, the Quran did not say, 'We have not taught him magic' because the claim was intrinsically fragile. The refutation of this claim was much simpler.

If Prophet Muhammad had been a magician, and those who believed in him had been bewitched by him, then why was he unable to bewitch the disbelievers as well. Therefore, their denial and disbelief in him were the strongest evidence that he was not a magician because a bewitched person does not have any resistance against magic.

Allah *Glorified is He* also refuted the claim that he was a fortuneteller. Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...and it is not the word of a foreteller' (*al-Haqq*: 42). This is because fortune-tellers speak using inane rhymed prose. The Quran is the complete opposite of this. The Arabs were a people of eloquence and rhetoric. They were the most knowledgeable of people in the issue of linguistic styles and distinguishing between them. They were perfectly capable of distinguishing between the Quran and other types of speech, and they even set markets and exhibitions for the sake of poetry and eloquence.

Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies the rationale behind Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* not saying poetry: ‘Indeed (this revelation) is nothing (else) except a reminder and a divine Quran’ (*Ya Sin*: 69).

Lexically, this verse is in the form of a negation. This method of negation is used to emphasize that the Quran is nothing other than a reminder for the people who use their intellect. It is only a divine discourse that is conveyed by a clear recitation. It may have a tune that is more pleasant in the righteous ears than the music of poetry, and some people transcend into a sublime world of meanings when they hear the Quran. However, the Quran is not a book of poetry.

The reason for this transcendental beauty is that Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who revealed these verses to His creation. He revealed the speech that has the most profound effect on His created beings and that will cause them to incline towards Him. This inclination will occur easily if the heart still possesses the natural disposition with which mankind was originally created. However, if people depart from this natural disposition, the Quran will not have the same effect on them. The source of revelation is certainly the same, but the dispositions of the listeners may vary.

Allah *Glorified is He* explains this matter for us: ‘And among them are (the ones) who listen to you (O Muhammad), until, when they go out of your presence, they say to the knowledgeable ones (amongst them), “What did he say just now?”’ (*Muhammad*: 16). So, Allah *Glorified is He* commanded Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* to respond to them by saying: ‘To the ones who have believed it (the Quran), it is a guidance and a cure; and the ones who do not believe, in their ears is an obstruction, and for them it is a blindness.’ (*Fussilat*: 44)

We previously illustrated the importance of the listener’s perception and disposition. We said that you may have to exhale over a hot cup of tea in order to cool it down, but in the winter, you probably exhale on your hands to warm them up. The action is the same, but its receiver is different. The same goes for people when they listen to the Quran. Some people receive Allah’s Speech with a sound natural disposition. They understand it and are affected by it. Others receive Allah’s Speech while they are busy with other engagements, so they are prevented from understanding it. Thus, they will not be transcendently affected by Allah’s speech.

Some people who do not speak a word of Arabic, but are profoundly affected when they hear or read Allah's speech, that their eyes may fill with tears. Why is this? There must be a factor in their natural disposition that allows them to be affected by its style.

Allah *Glorified is He* gave inspiration to inanimate objects, and they were affected by His speech. He also gave inspiration to animals and they understood it from Him. Thus, it is reasonable that He revealed a speech to rational men that coincides with their nature and affects them greatly.

Then, in the verse we are studying, Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies the mission of this clear Quran. He says, '...that he may warn whomever has a living (heart)' (*Ya Sin*: 70). Allah *Glorified is He* describes them as being alive. However, the material life will end in death. There is another form of life that is being stated in this verse. This is the life of intellect, thought and spiritual values. The rewards of these attributes will not be made completely manifest until after death.

All of mankind take part in a material life. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* bestowed upon them an element known as the *ruh* (spirit). This element gives the material existence a spiritual life, and the spirit's existence is part of Allah's Divine Knowledge and Command. After giving them the spirits with which material matter comes to life, He gave them the moral spirit with which their moral dispositions can be elevated. It is this moral spirit that elevates their real value in the Hereafter. It is true that these morals will give them peace of mind, rectitude, and stability in the life of this world, but nevertheless, the real reward will mostly appear in the Hereafter.

If Allah *Glorified is He* wills, he may give man a continuous life, just as Prophet Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* was given a continuous life. Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* asked his Lord: 'O my Lord! Surely the bones within me have become feeble, and my head is turned white with flaming white hair, and I have not been unanswered in invoking you, Lord! And surely, I fear what my kinsfolk would do after me, and my wife is barren. So bestow upon me, from Your close Grace, a constant patron, who will be my heir and also inherit the house of Ya`qub (Jacob) and make him, Lord, a pleasant (servant).' (*Maryam*: 4-6) Allah *Glorified is He* answered him: 'Thereupon the angels called out unto him: 'O Zakaryya (Zechariah)! We bring you

the glad tiding of (the birth of) a son whose name shall be Yahya (John). And Allah said, “Never have We given this name to anyone before him.”” (*Maryam: 7*) Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* gave him the glad tidings of a boy, and gave him the name Yahya, which indicated that He was going to have a long life. When you name your child *Dhaki* (intelligent), for example, you are optimistic that he will be intelligent. If you name him *Nabeel* (noble), you are optimistic that he will be noble. However, is it within your power to accomplish this hope of yours? That is why an Arab poet once said, in grief about his deceased son:

I called my son Yahya so that he would live longer,
but there is no way of stopping Allah’s decree.

You may name the child according to an attribute you wanted to see in them, but Allah is the Only Giver of life and its bounties. Allah *Glorified is He* named him Yahya (John), because He has the Power to give him a continuous life. That is why Yahya (John) died as a martyr, and therefore, his life in this world became connected to the life of the Hereafter and Allah’s Will was observed.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...that he may warn whomever has a living heart and that the true word (of punishment) will fall upon the disbelievers.’ (*Ya Sin: 70*) Indeed, these disbelievers will deserve punishment because they did not benefit from the warnings.

Then, after that, Allah *Glorified is He* stated some of His signs in the universe. He says:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا خَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِمَّا عَمِلَتْ أَيْدِينَا أَنْعَمًا فَهُمْ لَهَا مَالِكُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَذَلَّلْنَاهَا
لَهُمْ فَمِنْهَا رَكُوبُهُمْ وَمِنْهَا يَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَهُمْ فِيهَا مِنْفَعٌ وَمَشَارِبٌ ۖ أَفَلَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

**Can they not see how, among the things made by Our hands,
We have created livestock they control [71] And made them
obedient, so that some can be used for riding, some for food [72]
Some for other benefits, and some for drink? Will they not give
thanks? [73] (The Quran, *Ya Sin: 71-73*)**

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* turned their attention towards the material world that they cannot deny. We previously said that the verb *yaraw* used in such

verses could be referring to scientific awareness, or is a reference to the actual practice of seeing these signs with the organs of sight.

Allah says, '...that it is for them that We have created, among all the things which Our hands have made, the farm animals' (*Ya Sin*: 71). The words: '...which Our hands have made' (*Ya Sin*: 71) negated that any other creator was a partner with Allah *Glorified is He* in His creation. Rather, these living beings were created by Allah *Glorified is He* alone.

The phrase '...farm animals (*an'am*)' (*Ya Sin*: 71) refers to the domestic animals that are mentioned in the chapter of *al-An'am*, in a verse in which Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'His followers would have it that, in certain cases, any of these four kinds of cattle of either sex (is unlawful to man): either of the two sexes of sheep and of goats. Ask (them): "Is it the two males that He has forbidden, or the two females, or that which the wombs of the two females may contain? Tell me what you know in this respect, if what you say is true."' And (likewise they declare as unlawful) either of the two sexes of camels and of bovine cattle. Ask (them): "Is it the two males that He has forbidden, or the two females, or that which the wombs of the two females may contain? Were you (yourselves) witnesses when Allah enjoined (all) this upon you?" And who could be more wicked than he who, without any (real) knowledge, attributes his own lying inventions to Allah, and thus leads people astray? Behold, Allah does not grace (such) evildoing folk with His guidance.' (*al-An'am*: 143-144)

These cattle, camels, sheep and goats are called *an'am* (blessings) because they are having manifest bounties in numerous ways. We benefit from them in our lives, and from them we take wool, fur, leather, and different kinds of meat and milk. We also use them for carrying loads. All these are obvious blessings in the Arab culture.

Then, indeed the creation of these animals is a blessing in itself. His saying '...of which they are (now) masters' (*Ya Sin*: 71) is another blessing because there are other animals that are wild and cannot be controlled by hunting or force. These wild animals are of little benefit when compared to the tame animals that man uses by herding, riding, and milking.

Then, there is another blessing, which is that Allah *Glorified is He* subjugated these animals for us. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...and that We have subjected them to men’s will’ (*Ya Sin*: 72). If Allah *Glorified is He* had not subjected them to mankind’s control, we would have been unable to benefit from them easily.

A camel, for example, can be herded by a child easily despite its massive size and strength. The child can make it kneel before riding it. How can this be? It is because Allah *Glorified is He* subjugated it to our use. On the other hand, a smaller snake scares us away because Allah *Glorified is He* has not subjected it for us. Indeed, a flea in the bed can disturb you and make you anxious, and you have no real power over it.

Therefore, the creation of these farm animals is a blessing in itself, and our control over them is another blessing. These are bounties granted for both the believers and the disbelievers because they are a gift of Allah’s Lordship. Therefore, it is incumbent upon people to respect these blessings, and to ask themselves, ‘How can we disbelieve in Allah when He is the One Who constantly bestows all these blessings upon us?’ Unfortunately, some disbelievers did not stop at their own disbelief, but furthermore, prevented the messengers from spreading their religious call.


Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...so that some of them they may use for their riding (*rakubuhum*)’ (*Ya Sin*: 72). This refers to the beasts of burden. The words: ‘...and of some they may eat’ (*Ya Sin*: 72) is a reference to the foods we can produce from their milk while they are alive, which includes such food items as cheese, butter and so forth. Allah also says, ‘...and may have (yet other) benefits from them, and (milk) (*masharib*) to drink’ (*Ya Sin*: 73). The Arabic word *masharib* is the plural of *mashrab* (a drink). Here, it refers to the water-skins that are made from the leather of these animals which the Arabs used to use as drinking utensils. The word *masharib* could also be a reference to the milk itself that we can consume after the female animals deliver their newly born offspring.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* concluded these blessings with His saying: ‘Will they not, then, be grateful?’ (*Ya Sin*: 73) This phrase is placed in the form of a question so that the disbelievers can answer it themselves. Allah *Glorified is He* did not simply command these disbelievers, ‘Be grateful to Me for these blessings’! Rather, He asked them, ‘Are these blessings worthy of

gratitude'? If they show gratitude, they will surely be showered with more blessings, as Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'If you are grateful (to Me), I shall most certainly give you more bounties' (*Ibrahim: 7*).

Therefore, it is obligatory upon them to thank Allah *Glorified is He* for His blessings, as these blessings are inviting them to have faith in this Creator Who constantly bestowed His blessings upon them. When a man receives a monthly wage from his employer, he directs respect and gratitude towards him. Does the One Creator Who bestowed all these blessings not deserve to be worshipped and thanked?

However, the matter did not end at their lack of gratitude. The Quran told us more about them, as Allah *Glorified is He* says:


 وَأَتَّخِذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِلَهَةً لَعَلَّهُمْ يُنْصَرُونَ
 لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُمْ جُنْدٌ مُخَضَّرُونَ

**Yet they have taken other gods besides God to help them[74]
 Though these could not do so even if they called a whole
 army of them together! [75] (The Quran, *Ya Sin: 74 -75*)**

The Quran stated this fact about them after Allah *Glorified is He* had explained the signs that confirm His Exalted Existence and Oneness. Men find signs for Allah's Existence in the horizons that surround them and also find such signs within themselves. If a person abandons the first set of universal signs and is heedless towards them, how can they be heedless to the signs within their non-detachable essence? That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'In time We shall make them fully understand Our messages (through what they perceive) in the utmost horizons (of the universe) and within themselves, so that it will become clear unto them that this (revelation) is indeed the truth.' (*Fussilat: 53*)

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'But (nay,) they worshipped deities other than Allah (hoping) to be succoured (by them)' (*Ya Sin: 74*). It is true that man may worship a higher being to succour him when he is in difficulty. However, how can he worship an idol that, instead, is in need of man to recover it when the wind topples it over or when it gets swept away by accident? If it falls, he has to put it back up, and if its arm breaks, he has to fix its parts. If a flood

washes the idol away, it gets thrown in the mud. Therefore, how can he worship this idol as a partner with Allah *Glorified is He*?

You know that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* destroyed the idols of his people. They asked him: ‘... “have you done this to our gods, O Ibrahim?” He answered, “Nay, it was this one, the biggest of them, that did it: but ask them (yourselves) – provided they can speak.”’ (*al-Anbiya*: 62-63)

This is how Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* made them aware of the undeniable word of truth. They were only worshipping dumb inanimate objects that do not speak. ‘And so they turned upon one another, saying, “Behold, it is you who are doing wrong.”’ (*al-Anbiya*: 64) However, they quickly realised the danger of this admission, and they returned to their usual stubbornness and obstinacy. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘But then they relapsed into their former way of thinking and said, “You know very well that these (idols) cannot speak.”’ (*al-Anbiya*: 65)

At that point, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* confronted them with this reality that they were trying to turn away from. He told them: ‘Do you then worship, instead of Allah something that cannot benefit you in any way, nor harm you? Fie upon you and upon all that you worship instead of Allah! Will you not, then, use your reason?’ (*al-Anbiya*: 66-67) That is why Allah *Glorified is He* refutes their ignorant ways: ‘But (nay,) they worshipped deities other than Allah (hoping) to be succoured (by them)’ (*Ya Sin*: 74). This was because these idols did not have the ability to give succour to those idolaters who worshipped them. Rather, it is the worshippers themselves that supported the idols.

On the Day of Resurrection Allah *Glorified is He* will gather them altogether. The worshipper will be gathered with that which he worshipped, so that they can confront one another. If the idol worshipper was resurrected by himself, he may probably wait for his false idols to help and defend him. Thus, they will be gathered altogether, as Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘How is it that (now) you cannot succour one another? Nay, but on that Day, they would willingly surrender (to Allah).’ (*as-Saffat*: 25-26) Allah also says, ‘And Allah will thus command: “Assemble all those who were bent on evildoing, together with others of their ilk and (with) all that they worshipped (besides Allah).”’

(*as-Saffat*: 22) They will be placed altogether in the fire, the idol worshipper and the worshipped idol. These idols will be fuel for the fire that will punish their ignorant worshippers.

After that, the context was then directed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* who the disbelievers stubbornly and obstinately denied. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَلَا يَحْزُنُكَ قَوْلُهُمْ إِنَّا نَعْلَمُ مَا يُسْرُوكَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

So [Prophet] do not be distressed at what they say: We know what they conceal and what they reveal [76] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 76)

Allah *Glorified is He* consoled His Messenger to put his mind at ease. Any consolation must have a consoler and a person being consoled. In this case, the consoler is Allah *Glorified is He* the One Who sent the messenger being consoled. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* was comforting Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* in his times of difficulty. Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* never left His messengers without support, and the trials and tribulations the believers experienced were only placed to purify their souls and elevate their creed. Thus, only the true believers carried the responsibility of the message and defended it.

That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, addressing Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him*: ‘However, be not grieved (*yahzunka*) by the sayings of those (who deny the truth)’ (*Ya Sin*: 76). The Arabic word *yahzunka* (grieved you) is derived from the word *huzn* (sadness). This is the soul’s regret when a person does not accomplish what they were hoping for, and when their objectives are apparently failing. If Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* was sad and his soul was dispirited, who was going to console and remove his grief? Allah *Glorified is He* the one who sent him, consoled him because He knows what they keep secret and what they declare openly.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Verily, We know all that they keep secret as well as all that they bring into the open’ (*Ya Sin*: 76). What were these people keeping secret? Those that confronted Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him*

fell into two categories. The first category confronted him with courage. They declared on their tongues what was in their hearts, which was that they did not believe in him. These people were the disbelievers. The other categories were those who believed in him with their tongues, but concealed their disbelief in their hearts. These people were the hypocrites. The meaning of the words: ‘...all that they keep secret’ (*Ya Sin*: 76) could be referring to their intrinsic hypocrisy, while the words: ‘...as well as all that they bring into the open,’ (*Ya Sin*: 76) could be a reference to their disbelief.

On the other hand, the meaning of the words: ‘all that they keep secret’ could, in fact, be referring to their knowledge that he was a trustworthy and genuine prophet, while the words: ‘...as well as all that they bring into the open’ could be referring to their acts of disbelief. The evidence of their knowledge that Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* was truthful can be found in Allah’s words: ‘And in their wickedness and self-exaltation they rejected them, although their minds were convinced of their truth’ (*an-Naml*: 14).

Some of these disbelievers did not even deny the Quran or object to it. Their only objection was that it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad himself, and that is why, as the Quran states, these disbelievers said: ‘Why was this Quran not bestowed on some great man of the two cities?’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

Some disbelievers also entrusted Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* with their precious property. All of this was proof that they believed his trustworthiness. However, despite this, they openly declared words of disbelief. This disbelief in Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* was out of fear for their worldly authority along with their position of leadership and power. Prophet Muhammad’s teachings came to decrease their transgressions and superiority, and to put an end to their mastery over the weak and impoverished people. Therefore, they stood against Prophet Muhammad’s call with all their might despite their belief in his honesty.

The people in Medina were preparing to choose a king before the migration of Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* to their land.⁽¹⁾ When

(1) *Ibn Hisham mentioned in As-Sira An-Nabawyyah (3/216) that the people of Ibn Abu Ubay had arranged pearls in order to crown him and make him their ruler. Then,=*

Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* entered the city, the people gathered around him and the kingdom was dissolved before it was born. Thus, the worldly authority of the disbelievers disappeared. It also disappeared from the hands of the Jews, who were people of knowledge, wealth, and combat. All of this disappeared on the day the word of Islam was exalted.

The meaning of the words: ‘...all that they keep secret as well as all that they bring into the open’ could also be a description that the actions of man have two main elements. The first element is the intention which is a secret that is conspired inside his heart. This is the basic belief that pushes the person to act. If it is translated into action, it thus comes out into the open. According to this meaning, Allah *Glorified is He* was informing Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* that He has the Absolute Knowledge of their corrupt concealed intentions as well as the shameful acts that these disbelievers and hypocrites declared. However, the matter will not just end with Allah’s Knowledge. The consequence of this divine knowledge will be that Allah *Glorified is He* will punish the disobedient disbelievers and reward the obedient believers.

Therefore, this verse was instructing them to think deeply about their own affairs with Allah *Glorified is He*. It was a warning from the effects of this divine knowledge. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: ‘And be not grieved by the sayings of those (who deny the truth). Behold, all Might and Glory belong to Allah alone.’ (*Yunus*: 65)

After Allah *Glorified is He* stated His signs in the universe such as those signs in the earth, the sun, the moon, the orbits, the beasts and farm animals, He also mentions His signs in man himself. If the signs in the horizons surrounding them were not enough for them to turn to Allah *Glorified is He* then there were also signs within themselves that will not leave them.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

= Prophet Muhammad arrived at Medina while they were doing this. Ibn Abu Ubay’s heart was thus filled with hatred and enmity towards Prophet Muhammad. He entered Islam reluctantly and maliciously as a hypocrite.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٧٧﴾

Can man not see that We created him from a drop of fluid? Yet – lo and behold! – he disputes openly [77] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 77)

Allah's saying: 'Did man, then, not see' means, 'Does he not know'. This is because man did not literally see how he was created. Some people may ask, 'Who is the one who informed man that he was created by Allah'? Indeed, man knows this reality because no one in the entire universe has ever claimed to create him except Allah *Glorified is He*. Then, messengers came to us, including Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* who informed us that Allah *Glorified is He* created us. No reasonable person ever objected to this concept. Even the polytheists did not dispute it, and despite the many things that man claimed for himself, no man ever claimed that they created mankind.

The basic logical rule is that a claim can be confirmed for the one who makes it as long as there is no objection, otherwise, if this claim is not submitted to Allah *Glorified is He* then who is the creator of this world? If there was another creator, why has he not objected to the concept of Allah's divinity? Why has the other creator not demanded their rights concerning this creation? If that creator has become scared of confrontation or has not been made aware of this claim, he does not deserve to be a god.

We may notice that Allah *Glorified is He* says in the previous verses: 'Are they, then, not aware that it is for them that We have created, among all the things which Our hands have made, the domestic animals of which they are (now) masters.' (*Ya Sin*: 71), and in this verse, He says, 'Did man, then, not see (and become aware)' (*Ya Sin*: 77). In the former verse, he addressed the wider group of people in mankind, while in the latter verse he addressed an individual person.

Some scholars said that this verse was revealed concerning Ubay ibn Khalaf⁽¹⁾. He held on to the bone of an animal, crushed it into small bits in front of

(1) *There are several narrations regarding the circumstances in which this verse was revealed and those are as follows:*

- *Revealed regarding Ubay ibn Khalaf, and this is the position of Mujahid, 'Ikrima, 'Urwah ibn Az-Zubayr, As-Suddi and Qatada.*

=

Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* and said, 'Do you claim that your Lord will bring this to life again?'

Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* said, 'Yes. He will bring you back to life and He will put you in the Fire.' This verse could also be directed to mankind in the absolute sense, or for every denier of the concept of Resurrection, like Ubay ibn Khalaf.

Regarding His saying: '...from a [mere] sperm-drop...' (*Ya Sin: 77*), empirical science didn't discover anything of this matter until only recently, trying, modestly, to reveal some of the secrets of the beginning and development of human life, that we did not know anything about before. The drop of sperm is the substance, the microbe, or the effective seed that brings about fertilization when it makes contact with the egg. The drop of sperm swims in a fluid: the semen that it lives in. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: 'Was he not just a drop of spilt-out sperm.' (*al-Qiyama: 37*)

Modern empirical science has confirmed that the drop of sperm is responsible for determining whether the child will be a male or a female. The egg is nothing other than a vessel. Therefore, the woman has no say in this matter, and the evidence is in Allah's statement: 'Was he not just a drop of spilt-out sperm, which became a clinging form, which Allah shaped in due proportion, fashioning from it the two sexes, male and female?' (*al-Qiyama: 37-39*), i.e. the two sexes are from the drop of sperm. We said before: it is amazing that the ancient Arab women understood this reality that science only arrived at in modern times.

As for the Hadith of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* in this matter, it says that, 'If the man's fluid *ghalaba* (prevails) over the woman's fluid, the child will incline towards his father, and if the woman's fluid

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- = - Revealed regarding *Al-'As ibn Wa'il*, and this is a position of Ibn 'Abbas.
 - Revealed regarding 'Abdullah ibn Ubay ibn Sulul, and it is another position of Ibn 'Abbas. In his *Tafsir*, (3/581) Ibn Kathir said about the latter position: 'This is rejected because the chapter is Meccan and 'Abdullah ibn Ubay ibn Sulul was only in Medina. When everything is taken into equal consideration, these verses were revealed regarding either Ubay ibn Khalaf or *Al-'As ibn Wa'il*, or both, and in general, they apply to anyone who denies the Resurrection.'

prevails the child, will incline towards his mother.⁽¹⁾ They understood from this Hadith that determining whether a child is male or female depends on the fluid that comes first. However, when we consider the actual wording, the word *ghalaba* indicates predominance and precedence, and precedence can only be for the components that come from one drop of sperm, and are released in one direction. Therefore, they do not meet, and the meaning of *yaghlib* is that it comes first.

We said previously that now they are aware that when the egg comes out from the woman it causes a chemical change in her constitution, causing her body temperature to increase as well as change in her condition and heart rate. That is why they invented a thermometer to measure these changes, and with it the woman can know the time in which the egg goes down.

The drop of sperm is a microbe that is finite in its smallness. It can only be seen with a microscope. Allah have mercy on Al-'Aqqad⁽²⁾ who described this smallness in a very precise manner. He said: 'Indeed the procreation of the entire world – meaning the drops of sperm that bring them all into existence – can be placed in half of a tailor's thimble. Thus, glory be to the Creator Who brings out of this tiny, finite drop of sperm a complete human being. From it He brings out solid bones and muscles that are partially solid and partially supple. From it we have cartilage, nerves, flowing blood, the brain and so forth.

(1) *This Hadith is the response of Allah's Messenger peace and blessings be upon him to a question from 'Abdullah ibn Salam: 'Why does a child resemble its mother or its father?' He peace and blessings be upon him said: 'As for the child, if a man has sexual intercourse with his wife and gets discharge first, the child will resemble the father, and if the woman gets discharge first, the child will resemble her.' Ibn Salam then said: 'I bear witness that there is no Allah but Him and that you are the Messenger of Allah.' It has been narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (2938) from the Hadith of Anas and from Muslim in his Sahih (211) in the Book of Menstruation from the Hadith of Umm Salim: 'Indeed the man's fluid is thick and white, while the woman's fluid is thin and yellow. Whichever of them prevails and takes precedence then the child will come to resemble.'*

(2) Abbas Mahmoud Al-Aqqad, a scholar of literature who produced several written works who originated from Dumiat. His ancestors moved to Al-Mahalla Al-Kubra and one of them was working in *Aqada al-Harir*, and thus he came to be known as Al-Aqqad. His mother was Kurdish. He was born in 1889 AD in Aswan and died in Cairo in 1963 at the age of 76. He is buried in Aswan. *Az-Zirikli, Al-A`lam* 2/366.

This is what happens in the material body. What is more amazing is that this body also contains an intellect that comprehends, a tongue that speaks and tastes, eyes that see, a hand that grasps, a nose that smells, fingertips that touch and legs with feet that take steps. All of this is from a drop of sperm, this microbe that cannot be seen by the naked eye, this drop of sperm that the Quran describes as being vile fluid, vile because it comes out from the same place as urine. It is discarded in the sewage system along with contaminants, and if it gets on your clothes you must wash it off. Yet, from this vile fluid man is created, and indeed he reaches the highest levels of transgression and tyranny. How?

They said: 'It is because man has inherent good qualities and talents that he loves to display. When he is with those he loves, he is impressed with his beautiful appearance, his wealth or his intelligence and so forth. Thus, he tries to display these talents to them. If he is shown enmity then he has other talents for his enemies. With the enemy, he exerts all his talents to conquer his enemies. These are gifts and talents that are useful in situations of anger, animosity, and argumentation'.

That is why one of them said: 'How many of Allah's blessings are within me that I have praised him for which He gathers within me as three talents. The first is for me, the second is for my loved ones and companions and the third is for my enemy.



All of this is the meaning of '...then at once he is a clear adversary?' (*Ya Sin: 77*) which means that after man was created from this drop of sperm and from this vile fluid; suddenly, he becomes 'a clear adversary' (*Ya Sin: 77*) meaning a fierce enemy. The adjective *mubin* 'clear' (*Ya Sin: 77*) means that he clearly displays the talents of enmity that he has. Man cannot be *mubin* for anyone else unless the feature is clear within him; for, as the proverb says, 'he who lacks something, cannot give it'. A bad teacher is the one who cannot explain a piece of information to his student. This is because this piece of information is not clear for him in the first place. If the piece of information had been clear in his mind, he would have been able to explain it by any means.

Therefore, the meaning of 'a clear adversary' (*Ya Sin: 77*) is that he can display what is within himself very well. That is why you say: 'I clarified it for you because it is clear for me'; 'I was able to make it known for you

because it has been made known to me' and 'I made you understand because I have understood'. They are, thus, two types of talents. In situations of enmity the talents of man are accomplished; and he exerts all of them; and he does not spare any of them. For in enmity he displays whatever he has: wealth, courage, tricks and so forth.

It is amazing that all of this is implicit within a drop of sperm. It is also amazing that man shifts this enmity within himself and his enmity towards his enemies to enmity towards His Lord and Creator.

That is why the True Lord illustrates this enmity, not just that of Ubay, the cause of revelation, but of everyone who is like Ubay:


 وَضَرَبَ لَنَا مَثَلًا وَنَسِيَ خَلْقَهُ. قَالَ مَنْ يُحْيِي الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ رَمِيمٌ

 قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِي أَنشَأَهَا أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ

**producing arguments against Us, forgetting his own
 creation. He says, 'Who can give life back to bones after they
 have decayed?' [78] Say, 'He who created them in the first
 place will give them life again: He has full knowledge of
 every act of creation [79] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 78 - 79)**

We have discussed, before, the matter of striking a likeness and we said that *darb* (striking) is when one object is violently brought down into contact with another object. A condition therein is that the one striking is stronger than the one being struck. If not, then, the result will be the opposite. Ar-Rafi`i⁽¹⁾ *Allah rest his soul* said in this regard:

O he who mocks the misfortunes of fate
 You are harsh with yourself, not with fate
 O he who strikes the boulder with a stick
 Have you struck the stick or have you struck the rock?

(1) Mustafa Sadiq Ar-Rafi`i, was a scholar of literature and a poet. He is originally from Tripoli in modern-day Lebanon. He was born in Bahtim in his maternal grandmother's house in 1881 AD and he died in Tanta in 1927 AD. His poetry was mostly introductory verses or lines, but his prose was first-class. His writings include *Wahi Al-Qalam*, *Diwan Sh`ir* and *Ta`rikh Adab Al-'Arab*.

Likewise, the striking of a likeness is the bringing into existence of something that comes into contact with something else, in order to clarify for you the real, decisive effect. When you doubt something, for example, it is clarified for you by way of an example or a likeness that cannot be doubted, and thus your mind understands. In this regard, we have His saying when He wants to clarify for us the falsity of idolatry, and the difference between it and monotheism. Allah says, ‘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)

Yes, a slave who has for his masters several disputing partners and a slave owned by one master are not equal, and likewise idolatry and monotheism are not equal. His saying: ‘And he strikes out a likeness for us...’ (*Ya Sin*: 78) is referring to Ubay ibn Khalaf, and the likeness that he struck was that he took a bone that had decayed, and he began to crush it in front of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: ‘Do you claim, O Muhammad, that your Lord will bring this back to life after it turns to what you have seen’? Even if the verses were revealed regarding Ubay, they are certainly not restricted to him. Rather, they apply to anyone who denies the resurrection and refuses to believe in this matter.

The meaning of, ‘...and forgets his own creation...’ (*Ya Sin*: 78) is that if he reflected on himself and remembered his own creation, he would find the proof for what he is denying. Allah *Glorified is He* created you, man, from nothing, and thus you are brought into existence. When you die these remnants from you remain disintegrate and scattered in the earth. It is known, according to what our minds can perceive, that bringing into existence from that which already exists is easier than bringing into existence from nothing: ‘He is the One who originates creation and will do it again—this is even easier for Him...’ (*ar-Rum*: 27). The True Lord is addressing us in this verse according to our intellectual capacity and our logic, otherwise, it would not be said that something is easy and easier for Him. This can only be said with regards to human beings.

As for His words, ‘He says, “who can give life back to bones after they have decayed?”’ (*Ya Sin*: 78), they indicate that when this question is presented to the disbelievers who deny the resurrection they say: no one can bring the

dead back to life. Why? It is because they are measuring the matter according to the incapacity of human beings, and not according to the absoluteness of the Creator's Power.

It is amazing that Allah *Glorified is He* has affirmed for man the attribute of creation. He says, '...Glory be to Allah, the best of creators' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14), while man rejects and denies Allah's ability to create. If your Lord does not refrain from granting the ability to create, do not begrudge Him for being the best of creators.

We said, before, that if you find an attribute of Allah *Glorified is He* being used to describe human beings, then, you must understand it within the framework of His being: 'There is nothing like Him...' (*ash-Shura*: 11) because Allah *Glorified is He* has a *wajh* (a face) but not like the faces we know; He has a *yadd* (a hand) but not like the hands we know and so forth. Allah *Glorified is He* is One and Unique in His Essence; One and Unique in His Attributes; and One and Unique in His actions. Allah *Glorified is He* exists and you exist, but your existence is not like His Existence. Allah *Glorified is He* is wealthy and you are wealthy, but your wealth is not like Allah's wealth. His wealth is inherent and is never separated from Him, while your wealth is given to you.

Allah *Glorified is He* is the Creator and you are a creator, but there is a difference between your creation and Allah's creation. You create from that which already exists while He creates from nothingness. Your creation is inanimate, without life, whereas Allah's creation has life: it grows, nourishes itself, multiplies and so forth. Thus, you are a creator, but your Lord is the best of creators. Your Lord has attributes of absolute perfection, and from them He pours forth over His creation and gives them some of His attributes, but He still has Absolute Power.

The meaning of 'having been in a state of decay' (*ramim*)' (*Ya Sin*: 78) is the state of the bones when they are old, decayed and disintegrated.

Then, the True Lord responds to this denier and his ilk: 'Say, "He who created them in the first place..."' (*Ya Sin*: 79). 'Created them (*Ansha'aha*)...' (*Ya Sin*: 79), mean He created them from nothing, and He is going to bring them into being again from that which He initially created. His saying: '...in the first place...' (*Ya Sin*: 79) in response to this denier reveals that there is another instance, and another bringing to life other than the first. His words: '...He has full

knowledge of every act of creation' (*Ya Sin: 79*) refer to the first creation and the second creation. Knowledge of the first creation indicates granting man attributes and talents within his essence, settling him in the earth and providing him with the Way that regulates his life therein.

With this way, He guides him to the path of goodness, warns him about the paths of evil, and clarifies for him the subsequent reward for each. Furthermore, Allah *Glorified is He* has Full Knowledge of the other creation in the Hereafter, i.e. He knows how to reward man according to all that he put forward (in the life of this world). Therefore, the meaning of '...He has full knowledge of every act of creation' (*Ya Sin: 79*) is that He has Full Knowledge of how to assign duties to him and how to reward him. The reward is commensurate with the duties assigned.

Muslim philosophers wanted to clarify this meaning for us. They said: 'When Allah wanted to create from nothingness, and before the sky and the earth existed, He said: 'O sky! Come out and be sky!', and thus it was. The same goes for the earth. Therefore, it is His Powerfulness that did, and it is the powerlessness of things that was done. So, what is the outcome of these two components? Indeed, both are existent and continuing; the powerfulness of the doer and the powerlessness of things'.

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ الشَّجَرِ الْأَخْضَرِ نَارًا فَإِذَا أَنْتُمْ تُؤْقِدُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

It is He who produces fire for you out of the green tree – lo and behold! – and from this you kindle fire [80]
(The Quran, *Ya Sin: 80*)

The True Lord is putting forth to them another evidence of His Absolute Power: 'if you are in denial of the resurrection then look at this material sign that you witness'. The one who brings decayed bones back to life is also the one who produces from the green tree fire that you kindle. Thus, the green twig turns into flames. Greenness is proof of wetness and moisture. How does fire come from water? This sign is seen every day in Arab environments. It is known that firewood is the first fuel known to man and used by him properly because it is the purest of fuels. It is also healthy. It doesn't pollute the environment or harm it. It is for you to compare between firewood and petrol, for example. Then, you will realise the difference.

أَوَلَيْسَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِقَدِيرٍ عَلَى أَنْ يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ بَلَىٰ وَهُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ
الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٨١﴾ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ﴿٨٢﴾

Is He who created the heavens and earth not able to create the likes of these people? Of course He is! He is the All Knowing Creator [81] When He wills something to be, His way is to say, “Be”— and it is! [82] (The Quran, *Ya Sin*: 81- 82)

This is advancement in evidence. After He mentions the sign of producing fire from the green tree He puts forward stronger evidence which is the creation of the skies and the earth. The skies are evidence of something high and fixed that does not change. The earth is tangible evidence for us; we witness it and we come into direct contact with it. The standpoint of this verse comes in another verse where the True Lord says, ‘The creation of the heavens and earth is greater by far than the creation of mankind, though most people do not know it.’ (*Ghafir*: 57)

If one of you said: ‘Explain to us how the creation of the skies and the earth—despite the fact that they do not feel, speak or have knowledge and so forth—are greater than the creation of mankind’, we say: ‘Indeed, the creation of the skies and the earth is greater than the creation of mankind because from the time that Allah *Glorified is He* created them originally they have not changed, and they will remain as such until the Hour is established’. As for you, O man, you die. You die when you are a child, and you even die when you are an embryo in your mother’s womb. You die in your youth and you die when you are a decrepit old man. The utmost that man can reach if his life is lengthened in the life of this world is one hundred years or maybe a few years more. Then, how does your life span compare to the life span of the sun, the moon, or the earth? Have you ever seen a servant who has a longer life span than the one he serves?

We succeed one another in this universe as individuals, nations, and states; all disappear and come to an end, while the skies and the earth remain as they are, proud and mighty. No change happens to them. They never exit from the law of subjugation, in anything. From the time that Allah *Glorified is He* created this universe we have not seen a celestial body go out of its orbit, fail to comply with its appointed times or be prevented from carrying out its task.

This is the state of the inanimate objects in the skies and the earth, so what is your state, you who possess intellects? If we were to talk about material substance, it remains while you die. These inanimate objects support one another in meanings and values, while you differ amongst yourselves and fight with one another, so in what way are you better and greater creatures? That is why the True Lord responds in the form of a negative question: 'Is He who created the heavens and earth not able to create the likes of these people?' (*Ya Sin*: 81)

Then He says, '*bala* (yes), indeed He is able,' and '...He is the All Knowing Creator.' (*Ya Sin*: 81) The word *khallaq* (creator) is a hyperbolic form of the word *khaliq*. This is in order to stress the matter for the one who denies it. Furthermore, He is 'The All Knowing' (*Ya Sin*: 81). He is the All Knowing of who He created.

Then, He says, 'Verily, when He wills something to be, His way is to say to it, 'Be'—and it is!' (*Ya Sin*: 82) This is a subtle indication from the True Lord for everyone who denies the Resurrection. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to them: 'O you who deny Allah's Power to resurrect bones that have decayed, do you think that Allah creates by means of practice, in the same way that you create'? Allah *Glorified is He* is the Creator and He creates without practice. Rather he creates with the word 'Be!', or indeed He creates merely as He wills. If He wills something it is, without Him saying or commanding anything. The word 'Be!' is only to help us understand the matter.

We clarified the process before, by way of example—and for Allah is the highest similitude. We said: 'How can you, O man, deny Allah's Power when He has given you something that is similar within yourself? When you, for example, want to stand up from your seat what do you do? Do you command your muscles to move? Do you know which muscles will make you stand up, and what nerves govern this process'?

You simply stand because of your will to stand, and you have no say in the matter. The evidence is that a small child who does not know anything about the formation of his body stands up if he wants to stand. So, if things move for you—O man—without you telling them to do so; is it appropriate for you to deny this with respect to your Lord and Creator?

If you said: 'Why do I not command my limbs, and say to them 'Do this and that...' We say: 'The True Lord says 'Be!' to something because He knows

that things will carry out His command. They will not act against what He wills. As for you, O man, are you confident that they will carry out your command if you command them? Indeed, you are not confident of this matter, based on the proof that when Allah *Glorified is He* strips you off this power your limbs no longer obey you. Thus, if you want to stand you cannot. The limbs are paralysed and cannot move anymore’.

So, we say that if a created being can control his limbs simply by his will, are we going to deem it as far-fetched that the Creator, the Most Exalted, controls this universe that has been created by Him?

The word ‘Be!’ is said by Allah *Glorified is He* to make it easier for us to understand this matter. He says it because things never miss to obey Him and compliance with His command. As for you, if you said the same word (Be) nothing would respond to you. That is why the True Lord says, explaining how the earth responds to His command: ‘Obeying its Lord as it rightly must.’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 5) It is appropriate for the earth to listen and obey.

In His words, ‘...to say to it...’ (*Ya Sin*: 82), ‘it refers to the thing that has not come into existence yet. So, how does He address it when it is still non-existent? They said: ‘The Creator created everything in pre-eternity in a world called ‘*Alam Al-Mithal*’ (the world of analogies). So, the things do actually exist, but they await the command to become manifest and go out into the world of existence. That is why one of the knowers of Allah said: ‘they are matters that He reveals, but does not start’ (They do not have a start or an end). Allah *the Exalted* then says:

فَسُبْحَانَ الَّذِي يَدْرِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

**So glory be to Him in whose Hand lies control over all
things. It is to Him that you will all be brought back [83]
(The Quran, Ya Sin: 83)**

We know from the previous verse that when the True Lord says ‘Be!’ things respond and obey Him. On the other hand, if man says the same word, nothing will respond to him. We said that if you find an attribute of Allah *Glorified is He* being used to describe human beings, then you must understand

it within the framework of ‘...There is nothing like Him...’ (*ash-Shura*: 11). Thus, it is natural for all these verses and chapters to be concluded with ‘So Glory be to Him in Whose hands is the dominion of all things...’ (*Ya Sin*: 83). That is to say: transcendent is He above resembling anyone in His Essence, in His Attributes, and in His Actions.

The word *malakut* (the dominion) (*Ya Sin*: 83) is from *mulk* (dominion) and the three radical letters *mim*, *lam* and *kaf* are used for four meanings. The first is *maalik* (owner) and he is the one who owns something, regardless of how insignificant it is. Even if the only thing he owns is the clothes on his back he is still called *maalik*. The second is *malik* (king), and he is the one who dominates the one who owns, i.e. he is in a position to administer him and his behaviour. The third is *mulk* (dominion) and it is when a king ascends in outward matters that the people acknowledge. The fourth is *malakut* which means concealed and not manifest *mulk* (dominion). It is stronger and more general than *mulk*.

Something could be from the world of *al-malakut*, but then it moves to the world of *al-mulk*, such as things that were concealed and man discovered them or invented them, and thus they became witnessed. There are other things that always remain in the world of *al-malakut* and we do not know anything about them except in the Hereafter. This is the type that disbelievers deny. In this regard, we have His saying about the affair of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: ‘In this way We showed Ibrahim (Abraham) [Allah’s] mighty dominion over the heavens and the earth...’ (*al-An‘am*: 75).

Yes, Allah *Glorified is He* showed Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* the world of *al-malakut* because when He showed him the world of *al-mulk* and tested him, he passed the test with excellence, and he was successful in every stage of his life. He was successful when he was an old man and was commanded to slaughter his son Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him*. He was successful when he was thrown in the fire. For this reason, he became worthy of being shown the secrets of the universe, and the world of *al-malakut*. It’s is just as if you have amongst your children one righteous child in whom you see signs of superiority; you will distinguish him in a way which gives him preference over the rest of your children. Likewise, whoever becomes very good at his worship of Allah, Allah perfects His giving to him.

In this regard we also have the story that the Quran relates to us in the chapter of *al-Kahf* of the righteous slave whom Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* accompanied and learned from; the one of whom Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘and found one of Our servants—a man to whom We had granted Our Mercy and whom We had given knowledge of Our own.’ (*al-Kahf*: 65)

This righteous servant was not a prophet, nor was revelation given to him, but despite that the Prophet learned from him. Why? It is because he took what the messenger had come with and applied it to himself. When Allah *Glorified is He* saw from him that he could be trusted with His methods and secrets He increased his knowledge and granted him from His own knowledge, and unveiled to him the secrets of *al-malakut*.

Have you not noticed that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* got angry at him when he made the hole in the ship and purposely made it defective, while it belonged to poor impoverished people? This is the world of *al-mulk* that the righteous servant knew about. As for his knowledge of the world of *al-malakut*, it is in His saying ‘...I damaged it because I knew that coming after them was a king who was seizing every [serviceable] boat by force.’ (*al-Kahf*: 79) Allah *Glorified is He* revealed to the righteous servant part of the world of *al-malakut* as he revealed to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* the *malakut* of the heavens.

The word *malakut* carries the meaning of hyperbole, such as *rahamut* (great mercy), *jabarut* (exercise of absolute power) and *rahabut* (great fear), so there is thus hyperbole in *mulk*; but we notice amongst the scholars of Quranic recitation that one of them says, ‘*malik yawm ad-din*’ ‘Master of the Day of Judgement’ (*al-Fatiha*: 4), instead of *malik* (without any hyperbole). They said: ‘It is because the Day of Judgement is being discussed, and on this day, all of the *mulk* is for Allah *Glorified is He* and no one owns anything, not even the clothes that they wear’. In this regard, we also have the words we say in the call to prayer: ‘*Allahu Akbar*’ (Allah is the Greatest); the attribute *Akbar* is mentioned without any hyperbole, and not His name *Al-Kabir* (the Ever-Great) is not mentioned. How can this then, be the starting supplication of the prayer, which is the pillar of the faith, instead of the name? They said: ‘It is because the call to prayer takes people away from their work so that they can respond to the call of their Lord, and work has its consideration in Islam

because it is man's duty in life. With it he achieves obedience to Allah and that is why the religion appreciates work and does depreciate it.

Allahu Akbar indicates that work is great and important, but Allah *Glorified is He* is Greater and the call for your Lord is, thus, more important. As for *Al-Kabir* (the Ever-Great), it is one of Allah's Names, and it means that everything other than Him is small. That is why the call to prayer contains the description and not the name.

His word *malakut* in His statement: 'So Glory be to Him in Whose hands is the dominion of all things...' (*Ya Sin*: 83) means what you see and what you do not see of *al-mulk*—what is hidden from you, then you reached and discovered by knowledge; that which we do not see until Allah *Glorified is He* informs one of us, His servants, of: 'He is the One who knows what is hidden. He does not disclose it except to a messenger of His choosing.' (*al-Jinn*: 26-27)

The truth is that the divine secrets and hidden things of the universe are not discovered by man but rather, they are unveiled for him. Indeed, for every secret in the universe that Allah *Glorified is He* wants to manifest there is a lifetime and a birthdate. If its birthdate coincides with your searching then it appears on your hands, and if not then Allah *Glorified is He* makes it manifest for you coincidentally at its appointed time, if you have not been looking for it. That is why they say, 'Indeed seventy-seven percent of life's discoveries have come about coincidentally'.

Allah says in the verse of *Al-Kursi* (the verse of The Throne): '...He knows what is before them and what is behind them, but they do not comprehend any of His Knowledge except what He wills...' (*al-Baqara*: 255). Thus, man only encompasses knowledge of a small portion of Allah's Knowledge, and he does not encompass this simple knowledge except by Allah's Knowledge and permission, and only when He gives permission for the birth and appearance of this thing.

His saying, '...and unto Him you all will be brought back!' (*Ya Sin*: 83) refers to the Day of Judgment. So, make sure you remember this reality. Whoever does not believe in the blessing of creation let him be instilled with fear of returning and going back. You were not created in vain and you will not be left without any purpose.

the chapter of

as Saffat

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

The chapter of *as Saffat*⁽¹⁾ (Those Who Set the Ranks):

وَالصَّافَّاتِ صَفًّا ۝١ فَالزَّاجِرَاتِ زَجْرًا ۝٢
فَالتَّالِيَاتِ ذِكْرًا ۝٣ إِنَّ إِلَٰهَكُمْ لَوَاحِدٌ ۝٤

**By those [angels] ranged in rows [1] Who rebuke
reproachfully [2] And recite Allah's word [3] Truly
your Lord is One [4] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 1-4)**

The rhetorical device that Allah *Glorified is He* uses here is that of an oath. Allah *Glorified is He* is swearing upon the fact that, ‘Truly your Lord is One’ (*as-Saffat*: 4). The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* informed us of Allah’s Will regarding oaths. It is Allah’s wish that if we are to swear that we swear by Him alone. Nevertheless, we have seen in our studies that when the True Lord swears, He does so by one of His creations; sometimes He swears by His angels, sometimes by animals, sometimes by the mountains or the dawn and so on

The scholars said that this is because Allah *Glorified is He* may swear by whatever he wills to whomever He chooses. As for you and me we should

(1) This is the 37th chapter in the Noble Quran and has 182 verses. It is unanimously agreed that it is a Meccan chapter, as stated by Al-Qurtubi in his exegesis (8/5699). As-Suyuti mentions in Al-Itqan (1/27) on the authority of Ibn Ad-Daris in the chapter of Fada’il Al-Quran that the chapter of *as-Saffat* was revealed after the chapter of *al-An’am* and before the chapter of *Luqman*. On this basis, the chapter of *as-Saffat* would be the 55th chapter to be revealed.

swear only by Allah *Glorified is He*. To swear by something is a form of exalting that thing, and it is not appropriate for the believer to exalt any except Allah *Glorified is He*. It is incorrect to say, 'by the life of so-and-so' or 'by so-and-so's head'. If you want to swear you must swear by Allah *Glorified is He* as it has come to us in the Noble Hadith: 'Whosoever swears, let him swear by Allah.'⁽¹⁾

If it happens that an oath has apparently been sworn by other than Allah *Glorified is He* know that this is not considered to be an oath, especially if it came from a scholar, or when the statement reveals an expectation that is based on certainty, such as one says, for instance, 'by your father's life, O so-and-so, do such-and-such'. This is not an oath; this is a *musa'alah* (a way of requesting). An oath is when you swear on something whether it happened or not. When one seeks the occurrence of something, however, it is called a request. Similarly, the True Lord says, '...be mindful of Allah, in whose name you make requests of one another and the wombs...' (*an-Nisa'*: 1). He says, *tasa'alun* (make requests), and *al-arham* (the wombs). This means: 'you request one another also by virtue of these ties of kinship caused by the wombs'. According to another way of recitation it is read *bil-arham* (by the wombs), in the genitive case (*majrur*) ('bi' which means by, causes the verb to be read as *bil-arhami*).

The True Lord swears by what He wills to whom He wills, whereas, you swear only by Allah *Glorified is He*. It may be that a thing is insignificant in your eyes, yet, its creator deems great, and has a role that you are unaware of. When Allah *Glorified is He* swears by such a thing He draws your attention towards its role and its importance. For example, when the revelation upon the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* paused for a while, the disbelievers did not look to the wisdom in that. The wisdom therein was that the process of revelation was hard upon the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* such that it would take all his strength, making his

(1) This was related by Muslim in his *Sahih* (1646) in the chapter *Kitab Al-Iman* in the third Hadith on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar who related that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* found 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab on his mount swearing by his father, so the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* called them and said, 'Truly Allah has forbidden you from swearing by your fathers; so whosoever swears oaths, let him swear by Allah or remain silent.'

forehead perspire profusely⁽¹⁾. If revelation came down upon him while he was riding an animal it would groan and lay down⁽²⁾ due to the weight of the revelation. As Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Surely, We will send down to you a weighty Message.’ (*al-Muzzammil*: 5)

The period when the revelation paused was a mercy for the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* a lightening of his burdens and a time for him to regain his composure. In addition, it caused him to long for the revelation, and so it resumed once again. The disbelievers however took no heed of this and said, ‘Surely Muhammad’s Lord *qalah* (has scorned him).’⁽³⁾ *Qalah* means ‘He has been callous to him and abandoned him’. The self-contradiction that this statement contains is obvious; when called to faith they deny Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his Lord, but when an intermission in the revelation comes they say that his Lord has left him, thereby admitting that he does have a Lord!

For this reason, the True Lord chose to clarify this matter for them, manifesting their foolishness with the following oath which was revealed very appropriately at this time. It also contains a subtle indication of the link between the things sworn by and the issues sworn to. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘By the morning brightness and by the night when it grows still, your Lord

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- (1) ‘Aisha Allah be pleased with her said, ‘I saw the Revelation come down upon him *peace and blessings be upon him* on an extremely cold day and when it had passed his brow was indeed perspiring profusely.’ i.e., the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was perspiring a great deal on a day that was unusually cold. *Al-Bukhari* related this Hadith in his *Sahih* (2, *Kitab Bad’ Al-Wahi*).
 - (2) *Al-Bukhari* related it in his *Sahih* (4592) with a connected chain of transmission (*mawsula*) from the Hadith of Zayd ibn Thabit Allah be pleased with him that, ‘The verse, “Such of the believers as remain passive – other than the disabled – cannot be deemed equal to those who strive hard in Allah’s cause with their possessions and their lives...”’ (*an-Nisa*: 95), was revealed to the Messenger of Allah while his thigh was upon mine. It became so heavy for me that I feared that my thigh would be crushed.’
 - (3) Ibn Kathir relates in his *Tafsir* (4/532) on the authority of Jundub ibn ‘Abdullah Allah be pleased with him who said, ‘Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* was a long time coming to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and the polytheists began to say, “Muhammad’s Lord has left him.” So Allah revealed, “By the bright morning hours and the night when it grows still and dark. Thy Sustainer has not forsaken you, nor does He scorn you.”’ (*ad-Duha*: 1-3), to him.

has not forsaken you [Prophet], nor does He hate you, and the future will be better for you than the past; your Lord is sure to give you so much that you will be well satisfied.' (*ad-Duha*: 1-5)

The meaning of this is, 'You were worn out O Muhammad by the revelation and it was necessary for you take a rest so that your soul would come to desire and long for it. After you have rested your struggle to receive the revelation will be lightened and you will taste its sweetness once again and it will become easier for you'. The True Lord chose here to swear by something that is clear and present, with which no one could ever argue.

The disbelievers, surely, knew: '...the morning brightness' (*ad-Duha*: 1), when the sun is rising and sheds light on the world. Moreover, they were well acquainted with: '...the night when it grows still' (*ad-Duha*: 2), i.e. it becomes silent and tranquil. The point here is that when the bright morning hours come and the tranquil night follows it, are we to infer that the morning, with its brightness, will not return once again? No! Indeed, the morning will come again after you have rested from the tiredness caused by the day's work and have replenished your energy for another day.

The meaning of, '...and the future will be better for you than the past...' (*ad-Duha*: 4) is that when the revelation resumes it will be sweeter than the first time, lighter and easier to bear.

So, as we said, the True Lord swears by whatever He wills of His creation to teach us that these are magnificent things in the eyes of their creator, and that we have become heedless of aspects of their importance. He also swears by whatever He wishes of His creation to help us understand things unknown by means of things known to us.

In the first verse Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'By those [angels] ranged in rows' (*as-Saffat*: 1). The letter *waw* at the beginning of this verse is called *waw al-qasm* (the *waw* for oaths), like the letters *ta`a* and *ba`a* which are also used for oaths. We can swear an oath by saying *wa Allah* (by Allah), *bi Allah* or *ta Allah*. We can also identify a *qassam* (an oath)—without these 'letters for oaths'—by the *lam* at the beginning of *jawab al-qassam* (the thing sworn to); as in: '*innak la min al-mursalin*', 'you [Muhammad] are truly one of the messengers sent' (*Ya Sin*: 3), which followed the oath: 'By the wise Quran' (*Ya Sin*: 3).

You do not swear about something initially, rather you make an oath if the person you are talking to denies what you say. So, you swear to emphasize the information. The strength of the oath and the emphasis you use depends on the strength of the denial. The True Lord says, for example, ‘By the Day of Resurrection...’ (*al-Qiyama*: 1) or ‘I swear by this city, and you [Prophet] are an inhabitant of this city. [I swear] by parent and offspring, that We have created man or toil and trial.’ (*al-Balad*: 1-4) Also in: ‘Nay, I swear by the positions of the stars, a mighty oath, if you only knew that this is truly a noble Quran.’ (*al-Waqi’a*: 75-76)

There are oaths in these last verses, as evidenced by the existence of *jawab al-qassam* (the thing sworn to), but why does the Quran put these oaths in the negative saying *la* (Nay) before the word ‘*uqsim*’ (I swear). The scholars say that the use of the negative, here, makes the meaning stronger than using the positive, for the oath comes only to emphasise the thing sworn to, and the meaning of ‘Nay’ is that this matter is clear, there is no need for an oath because an oath is to emphasise something that is doubted or denied. As for this matter, it is clear and despite this I will swear for you.

Regarding the meaning of, ‘By those [angels] ranged in rows, who rebuke reproachfully and recite Allah’s word’ (*as-Saffat*: 1-3), the scholars say that ‘those ranged in ranks’ are the angels ranged in rows. *As-Saff* is the ordering of a group in such a way that there is no distinction between one individual and another. *As-Saff* does not merely refer to a group; it refers to a group that is disciplined and harmonious. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to straighten the rows when he was inspecting his forces before a battle. When he saw a man breaking rank and not standing in line, he poked him in the stomach so that he would set himself straight in the row. This man had deep love for the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. So, he said, ‘You hurt me, O Messenger of Allah.’ To which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, ‘Here is my stomach, take vengeance from it.’ So, the man came forward and kissed the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, ‘O Messenger of Allah, by Allah, I desire to be martyred and I would love my last contact in this life to be that of my body to have touched your noble body.’

The formation of ranks is an indication of orderliness, commitment, and preparedness to receive orders. Thus, the angels are arranged in ranks, awaiting orders so that each one may fulfil his role and duty.

When we consider the words derived from the root *sad*, *fa`a* and *fa`a* in the Quran, we find that they revolve around this meaning. Examples of this are evident in Allah's words: 'Therefore settle your plan, then come standing in ranks...' (*Ta Ha*: 64). *Saffa* means: grouped together and united. He also says: 'And your Lord has come and the angels, rank upon rank.' (*al-Fajr*: 22) The words '*saffan saffa*' mean (rank upon rank).

Allah *Glorified is He* also says, 'Have they not seen the birds above them expanding (their wings) and contracting (them)? What is it that withholds them save the Most Merciful...' (*al-Mulk*: 19)? *Saffatin*, here, means: expanding their wings. How true this is! You see a bird in the sky spreading its wings and not moving them, and despite this, it does not fall. Similarly, you see it draw in its wings and it remains in its place. So, what is it that prevents it from falling? It is the Most Merciful who holds it up. It is as though there is in this upholding of the bird which we see and witness a proof of the truthfulness of His statement: 'Verily, it is Allah alone who upholds the celestial bodies and the earth, lest they deviate from their orbits) – for if they should ever deviate, there is none that could uphold them after He will have ceased to do so. But, verily, He is Ever-Forbearing, Much-Forgiving!' (*Fatir*: 41)

So, His upholding of the bird is an example of how He upholds the heavens, except that the former is short term while the latter is long term.

Allah *Glorified is He* also says about the angels in general, 'we are ranged in ranks.' (*as-Saffat*: 165), i.e. we wait, disciplined, waiting for commands. Here *as-saff* indicates order and that no individual seeks to outrank another. It also gives an indication of the awe in which they hold the One before Whom they are arranged. Another example is His statement about the bliss of paradise: 'cushions set in rows.' (*al-Ghashiya*: 15)

Some of the scholars are of the opinion that *as-saffat* has a wider meaning than this and that what is intended by it is the proclamation of Islam, the spreading of its message, its defence, the protection of the freedom for people to choose Islam and of fighting. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah truly

loves those who fight in solid lines for His cause, like a well-compacted wall.’ (*as-Saff*: 4). The word *saffan* means: ‘in solid lines.’ The meaning of, ‘... in His cause...’ (*as-Saff*: 4) is: in order to proclaim His religion and to defend it in the face of enemies. The proclamation of the religion is the role of the scholars and its defence is the role of the soldiers on the battlefield. Both groups should be as one body, like a ‘...like a well-compacted wall’ (*as-Saff*: 4). For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...out of each community, a group should go out to gain understanding of the religion, so that they can teach their people when they return and so that they can guard themselves against evil.’ (*at-Tawba*: 122)

Thus, a scholar does not go out to fight because his role is that of undertaking the propagation of the faith. The warrior on the other hand sacrifices his life and dies for the sake of the call to Islam, and it is this sacrifice that proves the truthfulness of the call because had it not been truly in the believer’s soul, he would not have sacrificed himself for its sake. On top of this, his willingness to sacrifice his life is a proof of his belief in his going to a better place.

We are all familiar with the story of the companion of Prophet Muhammad who, while chewing a date, was listening to what the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* had to say regarding the reward of the martyr. He said to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘Is there nothing between me and paradise except that I should fight these people and be killed by them?’ ‘Yes, Indeed.’ Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied at which he threw away the date, considering chewing it to be too tardy, and rushed off to the battlefield.⁽¹⁾

(1) *On the authority of Jabir ibn `Abdullah Allah be pleased with him who said, ‘A man asked the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him on the day of Uhud, ‘If I were to be killed, where would I be?’ ‘In Paradise’, he peace and blessings be upon him replied. At this, he threw away some dates that were in his hand and went and fought until he was killed.’ This was narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (4046). Ibn Hajar said, ‘I did not come across the name of the man. Ibn Bashkawal, however, claimed that it was ‘Umayr ibn Al-Hammam and sought to prove it through the Hadith of Anas related by Muslim that mentions ‘Umayr ibn Al-Hammam. It is clear in the Hadith of Anas Allah be pleased with him however that what is mentioned therein occurred on the day of Badr, so it appears that they are two different stories that happened to two separate people, and Allah Glorified is He knows best.’*

Thus, fighting in Allah's Cause is either with one's tongue or one's spear, but it must be known that the one who fights with a sword does not carry it so that he can force non-believers to believe, for there can be no compulsion in religion. Rather, he does so to protect his freedom and his ability to choose this religion. The proof of this is that many countries were conquered by Islam and yet the peoples stuck to their beliefs and religions.

The unity of the ranks mentioned in these verses does not apply only to the fighters on the battlefield, but it is just as applicable to those who carry the message. These scholars must also be as one body in their call to Islam, undivided by difference of opinion. They must hold fast to that which is *muhkam* (decisive) of Allah's words, and they must not accuse each other of disbelief regarding that of it which is *mutashabih* (susceptible of different interpretations).

As for Allah's words: 'who rebuke reproachfully' (*as-Saffat*: 2), the scholars say that this is the job of the angels. They drive back the devils who try to eavesdrop. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'we used to sit in places there, listening, but anyone trying to listen now will find a shooting star lying in wait for him.' (*al-Jinn*: 9)

Before the advent of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* the devils used to go up to the heavens to eavesdrop for news. Allah *Glorified is He* allowed them to pick up some bits of information which they conveyed to their associates among mankind, yet, they added falsities to the information they had and then told people of these things pretending to know the unseen. When Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent, they were prevented from eavesdropping, and Allah *Glorified is He* made them subject to shooting stars which would strike and burn them.

If one were to ask, 'How can this be when we see the many stars stay as they are, not falling from the sky'? We say, 'Among the stars, there are those that beautify the sky and those that strike the devils. The proof of this is in Allah's words: 'We have adorned the lowest heaven with stars, and made them a safeguard against every rebellious devil: they cannot eavesdrop on the Higher Assembly, pelted from every side, driven away, they will have perpetual torment.' (*as-Saffat*: 6-9)

As for Allah's words, 'and those who recite Allah's word' (*as-Saffat*: 3), the scholars said that this refers to the angels that brought the revelation down to the messengers *peace be upon them* for they recite it to them after they have brought it down from Allah *Glorified is He*.

Other scholars understood a different meaning from, 'By those [angels] ranged in rows' (*as-Saffat*: 1), from which other meanings for 'who rebuke reproachfully, and those who recite Allah's word' (*as-Saffat*: 2-3) can be derived. They said that 'By those [angels] ranged in rows' (*as-Saffat*: 1) refers to the believers and the rows they form in their prayers, for they are the foundation of the religion and a symbol of social cohesion and unity.

That is why the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Straighten your rows, for indeed, straightening the rows is from the perfection of the prayer.'⁽¹⁾ He *peace and blessings be upon him* also said, 'Indeed, Allah does not look at the crooked row.'⁽²⁾ Lining up in rows in the prayer prevent break away from others and indicate discipline, submission to Allah and standing humbled in front of the True Lord. So, just as the angels are arranged in rows, so you, O believers are also arranged; and for each one there are forms of worship and a form of prayer.

So, once we have straightened our rows and are standing ready for Allah *Glorified is He* we start our prayer by saying, 'I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Satan', in a way of driving Satan away. Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'By those [angels] ranged in rows, who rebuke reproachfully' (*as-Saffat*: 1-2). The meaning of 'and those who recite Allah's word' (*as-Saffat*: 3) is what we recite after of Allah's words: 'Praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy.'⁽³⁾ (*al-Fatiha*: 3-2)

What we have discussed so far was the oath; so what is that is being sworn to? The oath has been taken regarding Allah's words: 'truly your Lord is One'

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- (1) *Al-Bukhari related it in his Sahih (723) and Muslim in his Sahih (433) in the chapter of Kitab As-Salat – Bab Taswiyat As-Sufuf (28). Both of them related it on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him.*
 - (2) *Among the Hadiths that have been related along these lines is the Hadith that Ahmad related in his Musnad (2/97) and Abu Dawud in his Sunnan (1/178) on the authority of Abdullah ibn 'Umar Allah be pleased with him that the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Straighten the lines and bring the shoulders together, fill the gaps and go easy on the arms of your brothers, and do not leave any spaces for the Devil.'*

(*as-Saffat*: 4). In addition to the fact that this statement is *jawab al-qassam* (the answer to the thing sworn to), Allah *Glorified is He* has emphasised it further by adding the word truly. He, then, emphasised it even further by adding the letter lam: *la wahid* (is One). This is because this affirmation is the basis of the religion and the essence of belief. The true Allah *Glorified is He* is One and the Guardian of all of this. We have said earlier that *wahid* (One) is not the same as *ahad* (singular), for *Wahid* means that there is no other like Him, whereas *Ahad* means that He is not composed of parts; He is One in His Essence.

Then, the True Lord says:

رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَرَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ

**Lord of the heavens and earth and everything between them,
Lord of every sunrise [5] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 5)**

In another verse Allah says, 'Everything in the heavens and on Earth, everything between them, everything beneath the soil, belongs to Him.' (*Ta Ha*: 6) That which is 'beneath the soil' is what we need to search for in order to discover, moving it, as we said before, from the concealed world to the seen world.

Here Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...Lord of the sunrises' (*as-Saffat*: 5). In another place He says, '...by the Lord of the sunrises and sunsets...' (*al-Ma'arij*: 40). Thus, the True Lord leaves some space for the use of terms that are actually intimations leading to the gain of an intellectual grasp. So, as long as there are sunrises there must be sunsets per contra. This is because the sun does not rise on a people except that it sets on another. Thus, we call this inseparableness.

When we explore these two words in the Book of Allah *Glorified is He* we find that sometimes they are used in the singular *al-mashriq* and *al-maghrib*, 'He is Lord of the east and west...' (*al-Muzzammil*: 9), sometimes in the dual, *al-mashriqayn* and *al-maghribayn*, '[He is] Lord of the two sunrises and Lord of the two sunsets' (*ar-Rahman*: 17) and sometimes in the plural, *al-mashariq* and *al-magharib*, '...the Lord of the sunrises and sunsets...' (*al-Ma'arij*: 40). This is because when Allah *Glorified is He* is addressing one person in one place he says *al-mashriq* and *al-maghrib* because one place has one east and one west. If there are several places then there are several *mashariq* (sunrises)

and *magharib* (sunsets). We can see that within one country, for example, the sunset in Cairo is not the same as the sunset in Alexandria. If we then look to the whole globe, we realise that there are an infinite number of points of sunrise and sunset; in every half of a degree there is a new point of sunrise and a new point of sunset.

Due to the wisdom of the Creator in making the earth turn upon itself, and around the sun, is that it spreads the necessities of life all over the planet. Were the sun to stay facing just one place that place would be scorched, and if it were to remain absent from any sun that place would freeze up. The result of this movement is that the True Lord is worshipped in every way always. We have stated previously that at any given time, there are people praying the dawn prayer, people praying the noon prayer, others praying the afternoon prayer, the evening prayer, and the night prayer. So, the prayer continues throughout the day and the night.

As for His words: '[He is] Lord of the two sunrises and Lord of the two sunsets.' (*ar-Rahman*: 17), the scholars say that *al-mashriqayn* to the east and the west or to the sunrise in summer and the sunrise in winter.⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

إِنَّا زَيْنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِزِينَةِ الْكَوَاكِبِ ﴿٦﴾ وَحِفْظًا مِّنْ كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ مَّارِدٍ ﴿٧﴾
لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ إِلَى الْأَعْلَىٰ وَيُقَذَّفُونَ مِنْ كُلِّ جَانِبٍ ﴿٨﴾ دُحُورًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ وَاصِبٌ ﴿٩﴾

We have adorned the lowest heaven with stars [6] and made them a safeguard against every rebellious devil [7] they cannot eavesdrop on the Higher Assembly – pelted from every side [8] driven away, they will have perpetual torment [9]

(The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 6 - 9)

How true this is! When we look at the sky at night we find it adorned with glittering stars. In these stars are secrets and wonders that the illiterate Bedouin

(1) On the authority of Ibn `Abbas Allah be pleased with him who said, 'The sun has a place of rising in the winter and a place of setting in the winter, and it has a place of rising in the summer and a place of setting in the summer, distinct from its place of rising in the winter and distinct from its place of setting in the winter.' It was related by As-Suyuti in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* (7/695) and he attributed it to Sa`id ibn Mansur, Abd ibn Humayd, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Mundhir and Ibn Abu Hatim.

was aware of. He knew the star, its name, its place, and its movement. Moreover, he used it to guide him in his travels through the desert. It is as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and landmarks. And by the stars they find the right way.' (*an-Nahl*: 16)

When we reflect upon these stars in the sky we see that Allah *Glorified is He* desired to have mercy upon us by protecting us from the heat of the sun, while leaving some light that guides us at night; for these stars radiate light in the same fashion as the sun.

The stars have another role, 'and made them a safeguard against every rebellious devil.' (*as-Saffat*: 7). That is to say, these stars protect us from the devils because they come down upon them and burn them. This type of stars is called *nayazik* (meteors). As for the stars that ornament the sky, they remain as they are, for they have no role to play in this matter. The stellar bodies that have been set aside for the rebellious devils will however decrease in number.

Al-Marid (rebel) refers to the one who turns against the path of his Lord following in the footsteps of Satan. Among his offspring are those who take the same stances that Satan took in regard to Adam *peace be upon him*. If someone were to ask, 'Allah wants his path to encompass the whole world so that peace, safety, and tranquillity may encompass it also, then why did he create Satan to rebel against Him'? We say that He did it to strengthen the believer's faith in the face of opposition. If there were no opposition, what distinction would there be if all creation are believers and all are obedient? Hence, the reason behind this is to purify the people of faith and to put them to the test. By such means we will know those who are steadfast; for it is they who will carry the message of Islam so that it might endure until the Last Hour. Such a message can only be carried by people of resolution.

The True Lord says, 'they cannot eavesdrop on the Higher Assembly, pelted from every side' (*as-Saffat*: 8). Let us consider that these verses come after Allah's oath by the angles 'who rebuke reproachfully' (*as-Saffat*: 1). We said that one of the meanings of *az-zajirati zajra* is: the angels who drive the devils back from eavesdropping on the highest council from where they used to take some pieces of information and pass them on to their associates among the soothsayers, who would add many untruths to it in order to lead people astray.

Incidents of eavesdropping were numerous before the advent of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* but when he was sent, Allah *Glorified is He* prevented them from it and subjected them to shooting stars that would come down upon them and drive them back. As the Quran tells us, ‘We used to sit in places there, listening, but anyone trying to listen now will find a shooting star lying in wait for him’ (*al-Jinn*: 9). This was to ennoble the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and prevent the devils from introducing any falsifications that might corrupt people’s beliefs. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘who rebuke reproachfully’ (*as-Saffat*: 1).

One of the strange things about the word *az-zajr* (driving back) is that it has two meanings. The sentence *zajartu insan* means ‘I prevented a man’ from doing something. *Zajartu ad-da’* means ‘I drove the animal onwards’. An example of the latter is the poet’s saying:

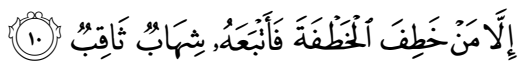
Woe to us, two intimates, a promise between us,
But this one has his nest, and that one another,
But when my yearning for reunion became too pressing,
I drove my horses to fly and not canter.

An example of the former would be the verses:

There remains not between us any room for love,
I forbade you from obscenities and you forbade me to advice.

In short, the meaning is that these devils have been prevented from listening to any news from above since the advent of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* yet they try, but the angels prevent them and send down shooting stars upon them.

In Allah’s saying, ‘And are pelted from every side’ pelting refers to being assailed with meteors such that each shot is accurate. ‘Repelled’ means they are reprehensible, rejected, and scorned. ‘And for them is a constant punishment’ it will be enduring and unchanging. He has described the suffering as being lasting because it comes between him and the execution of his goal of eavesdropping on, and gleaning news from above.



**If any [of them] stealthily snatches away a
fragment, he will be pursued by a piercing
flame [10] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 10)**

Thus, some of these rebels will indeed manage to snatch some news; they will not however be able to escape with it nor convey it to their associates. Snatching is a type of taking possession without right. Each one of us has property and possession of it, and nothing negates that possession except if someone takes it away from us through some sort of transgression or oppression. Transgression and oppression have many means such as snatching, which is to take something away from someone very quickly, such that they see you but are unable to stop you because the thing is distant; like a small child snatching something from a shop and running off. If the owner is present and able to grab the offender but the latter fights and overcomes him and takes the thing, then this is called wringing. If the offender takes the thing without the owner's knowledge it is called robbery. If he has been put in charge of the wealth and he takes some of it is called embezzling. These are all ways of taking possession of wealth without right. Thus, the devils snatch some news and try to flee with it but how wrong they are; 'pursued by a burning flame' will come down upon them. The meaning of 'piercing' is that it will penetrate the atmosphere until it reaches its target as quickly as possible.⁽¹⁾

If one were to say, 'Why are they not prevented from eavesdropping in the first place'? The scholars said there is a difference between someone being prevented from something in the first place, and being permitted to get his hands on it but not fulfil his goal or benefit from it. Allah allows them to actually hear some news but then the angels and the meteors instantly bear down upon them from every direction. In this way, their affliction is greater. They are afflicted by the trouble to eavesdrop, the attempt to flee and the resulting exhaustion, in addition to the failure to benefit from what was heard.

(1) *It is related on the authority of Ibn `Abbas Allah be pleased with him that he said, 'Indeed a Jinni will come to eavesdrop. If he manages to overhear something he is assailed by meteors. He says to the one following him, "It was such and such."' This was related by As-Suyuti in Ad-Durr Al-Manthur (al-A'raf: 80) and he attributed it to Ibn Jarir and Ibn Mundhir.*

فَأَسْتَفِهِمْ أَهُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمْ مَنِ خَلَقْنَا إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ لَازِبٍ ﴿١١﴾

So [Prophet], ask the disbelievers: is it harder to create them than other beings We have created? We created them from sticky clay [11] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 11)

Allah's saying, 'inquire of them' is a command from Allah *Glorified is He* to His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. When a man is setting out to do something and is ready to embark upon a course of action yet he does not know how to go by it, he goes to someone who is more knowledgeable than he is and seeks his opinion and the strength to carry out the job. So, it is as though he was weak and desired to strengthen himself with another's opinion. So, it is as though the True Lord *Glorified is He* has trusted them to give their opinion and provide the answer. For Allah *Glorified is He* knows that the opponents will find nothing but the truth to reply with. Allah *Glorified is He* does not state the answer Himself for this reason; rather, He has them provide it by way of confirmation. A statement is something that can be believed or denied whereas confirmation cannot be denied by anyone. For this reason, it is said, 'confirmation is the master of proofs'.

The question, 'Then inquire of them, [O Muhammad], "Are they a stronger [or more difficult] creation or those [others] We have created?"' means, 'was their creation a greater affair than that of the heavens and earth'? Allah does not provide the answer because it is so obvious. It could only be that the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater and mightier than their creation. Because of this, Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse, 'The creation of the heavens and earth is greater than the creation of mankind, but most of the people do not know.' (*Ghafir*: 57) If one needs proof in this matter, then ponder the creation of oneself and the creation of the heavens and the earth. Even though the heavens and the earth are at your disposal, they are older than you and will outlast you. Since Allah first created them, they have remained unflinching. As for man, he may die in childhood, in youth or in senility. He dies and he leaves his legacy behind for the coming generations to inherit. Heaven and earth on the other hand are greater and mightier because they are enduring creations and they are subjugated by choice. They said, 'We have come willingly.' (*Fussilat*: 11)

Hence, they chose to be subservient. Allah *Glorified is He* also says, 'Indeed, we offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant.' (*al-Ahzab*: 72) There is a difference between the ability of a person to take responsibility upon himself and his ability to fulfil it. One may take a responsibility upon oneself and intend to fulfil it but cannot guarantee that one will do so, for perhaps circumstances might change, or something might overtake you that comes between you and its completion. That is why the heavens and the earth held back from accepting the aforementioned trust, abandoning what they wanted for what their Lord wanted, and were thus subservient. So, they, too, were given a choice, the difference being that they made their choice with one word which extended to all time. Man, however, chose to always be choosing to do, or not to do. Moreover, the heavens and the earth and in-between of creatures, planets, bodies, and constellations move in a well-planned, precise order, never differing or deviating. 'The sun and the moon [move] by precise calculation. And the stars and trees prostrate.' (*ar-Rahman*: 5-6) 'It is not allowable for the sun to reach the moon, nor does the night overtake the day, but each, in an orbit, is swimming.' (*Ya Sin*: 40) As for man, he stumbles in his life and opposes the way of his Lord, turning away from the path that has been laid out for him. So, which of these creations is more magnificent, greater in its formation, and more correct in its performance? These disbelievers are unable despite their disbelief, to say other than, 'the heavens and the earth are greater and mightier than the creation of man'.

Another example of this is: 'And if you asked them who created them, they would surely say, "Allah."' (*az-Zukhruf*: 87), and..., if you asked them who created the heavens and earth, they would surely say, "Allah."' (*az-Zumar*: 38) These are all realities that cannot be denied, even by the disbelievers. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* gives them another example of the truth of this matter saying, 'Indeed, We created men from sticky clay.' This is their origin, so where do they stand in comparison to the heavens and the earth?

The True Lord *Glorified is He* is telling us here about the first creation of man, 'Then inquire of them, [O Muhammad], "Are they a stronger [or more difficult] creation or those [others] We have created?" Indeed, We created

men from sticky clay.’ Adam *peace be upon him* was created out of clay and Eve was created after him. The Quran tells us the story of the creation of Adam, but Allah *Glorified is He* suffices with saying, ‘and of it created its mate’ (*an-Nisa*: 1) when describing the creation of Eve.

The scholars said that ‘and of it’ means ‘of the same sort of creation’, so it is possible that Eve was created out of clay as was Adam or was created from one of his ribs. In any case, we return to an origin of clay. Allah *Glorified is He* creates whatsoever He wills.

So, the first man, Adam *peace be upon him* was created from clay, and of his sort was his wife created. Then came Adam’s offspring after he moved on from his earthen nature and became human. So we, even though we come from a human lineage, still have our origin in clay. If one were to ask, ‘Where is his earthen nature?’ He has taken a different form that bears no resemblance to earth; for if he washes with water he does not dissolve and disintegrate as clay does?’

We would say it is necessary that man, be he the first man or his offspring, return back to his original source, which is clay. Man bears children and multiplies by means of the sperm of the male and the egg of the female, but where did these two come from? From blood; and blood is produced from food; and food comes from the earth and clay. Thus, whatever the case, we are created from clay. The only difference is that in one case there is an intermediary and in the other there is not. The True Lord *Glorified is He* alerted us to this matter in His saying, ‘We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth.’ (*Fussilat*: 53)

We did not witness the process of creation; we were only informed of it by Allah. Thus, we know that man was created from clay that underwent these stages, until Allah breathed into it the spirit and filled it with life.

Then there is another thing; when the body of man, created from clay and nourished by food that comes from clay, was analysed by scientists, they found that it is composed of 16 amino acids, the first of them is oxygen, then carbon, then hydrogen, then nitrogen etc. These are the same elements that agricultural soil which gives us our food is composed of. So here is another proof of Allah’s Truthfulness.

بَلْ عَجِبْتَ وَيَسْخَرُونَ ۚ وَإِذَا ذُكِّرُوا لَا يَذْكُرُونَ ۚ
وَإِذَا رَأَوْا آيَةً يَسْتَسْخَرُونَ ۚ

**You marvel as they scoff [12] take no heed when they are
warned [13] and resort to ridicule when they see a sign [14]
(The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 12-14)**

What was it that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* wondered about? He was surprised by their rejection and disbelief despite the clarity of the cogent proofs of the truthfulness of the case for faith. We furnished them proof upon proof, but they still disbelieved. That is why Allah says in another place, addressing His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘And if you are astonished, [O Muhammad] - then astonishing is their saying.’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 5)

Allah *Glorified is He* is confirming Muhammad’s astonishment. The meaning is therefore, ‘If you are astonished Muhammad, it is because what they said was indeed astonishing’. But who considers this astonishing? It is possible that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was astonished and it is possible that Allah *Glorified is He* was too. So, does Allah *Glorified is He* gets astonished as we do? The scholars maintained it is true, and the proof of which is that this verse has another reading that affirms the speaker is Allah *Glorified is He*. Further proof of this can be found in the Hadith, ‘Your Lord is amazed by the young man who has no sensual passion.’⁽¹⁾ Why? Because he has gone against general human nature, or has overpowered his lower self and controlled it, such that he does not do what other young men do. This is something extraordinary. Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* is astonished by this behaviour and He rewards it with an extraordinary reward.

We have already said that if we find an attribute that is shared between ourselves and the True Lord *Glorified is He* then we must look at it in the light of the verse, ‘there is nothing like unto Him’ (*ash-Shura*: 11). Of this sort is

(1) On the authority of `Uqba ibn `Amir who said, ‘The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, “Truly Allah is amazed at the young man who has no sensual passion.”’ It was related by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (4: 151) and Ibn Abu `Asim in *As-Sunna* (1: 250) Al-Haytami mentioned it in *Majma` Az-Zawa`id* (10: 270) and attributed it to Ahmad, Abu Ya`la and At-Tabarani and said that, ‘its chain of narration is good.’

His saying, 'Indeed, the hypocrites [think to] deceive Allah, but He is deceiving them.' (*an-Nisa*: 142) And His saying, 'But they scheme, and Allah schemes. And Allah is the best of schemers.' (*al-Anfal*: 30) Beware therefore of saying, 'Allah is deceptive' or 'Allah is a schemer' because there is a difference between Allah's names and the actions that Allah has attributed to Himself. Scheming, for instance, is a human action by which cheating, deception and enmity are intended so that one might get to the end of one's desires. Such scheming is then met with other scheming that seeks to obscure it or be even more devious than it. Scheming is full of convolutions and artifices to cover one's evil deeds from one's enemy. This is human's scheming for one another. If, however, Allah schemes against you, then nothing can save you from His design. That is why Allah says *Glorified is He*, 'And Allah is the best of schemers.'

As for Allah's saying, 'while they mock' the meaning is that: you are astonished by their denial and disbelief despite the clarity of the proofs, and they mock both you and your astonishment.

'And when they are reminded' with more signs and proofs to guide them, 'they remember not' they do not look to them but instead turn away and persist in their denial. 'And when they see a sign' a new proof, 'they ridicule', i.e. they go to extremes in their mockery. In the verse before this one, Allah says, 'they mock' but in this one, He says, 'they ridicule'. This is evidence that among these disbelievers are people whose hearts are affected by Allah's signs and proofs. When their hearts are softened, their plots against Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* are lessened. They suffice themselves with denial instead of mockery because rejection has different levels. One person will refuse to do what you tell him but another will refuse you and then mock you. Those mentioned in the latter verse do not suffice themselves with mocking the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; 'they ridicule' means that they want to make those who are not mocking mock. There is a difference between one who mocks and one who seeks to induce mockery. We do not say as some of the orientalist do that this is repetition in Allah's speech.

وَقَالُوا إِن هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٥﴾

**Saying, ‘This is no more than blatant sorcery [15]
(The Quran, as-Saffat: 15)**

Magic as we said is to create an illusion about reality; the magician makes it appear to you that something is real. Magic does not change the reality of the thing; only the one looking at it is affected. Allah *Glorified is He* says regarding Pharaoh’s sorcerers: ‘they cast a spell upon the people’s eyes.’ (*al-A’raf*: 116) And, ‘their [magic] ropes and staffs seemed to him to be moving rapidly.’ (*Ta Ha*: 66)

So we ask how then is Muhammad’s preaching or the faith that He calls people to magic? The rebuttal of this calumny is clear and easy. If Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was able to cast spells on people to make them believe in his message, and did so on those who believed in him, why then did he not cast a spell on you? Thus, we can see that this is a false accusation that has no substance.

Then they go back to asking about the issue of the resurrection, trying to throw doubt on it. It is however one of the basis of religion without which faith cannot subsist.

أَءَدَا مِنَّا وَكُنَّا نُرَابًا وَعَظْمًا ءَإِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ ﴿١٦﴾
أَوَءَابَاؤُنَا الْأَوَّلُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ قُلْ نَعَمْ وَأَنْتُمْ دَاخِرُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

**‘What! After we have died and become dust and
bones, shall we really be raised up again [16] along
with our forefathers? [17] Say, ‘Yes indeed, and you
will be humiliated’ [18] (The Quran, as-Saffat: 16-18)**

It is strange that they should deny the resurrection after all the proofs we have given them. Even if they rejected our proofs and disbelieved in them, have they not heard from past nations and previous revelations that the resurrection is true? We can see this is just arrogance and obstinacy in accepting the truth. For this reason, the Quran strikes a parable for them and evidence of the truthfulness of this information about the resurrection. He puts this story

in the context of the previous nations: ‘Or [consider such an example] as the one who passed by a township which had fallen into ruin. He said, “How will Allah bring this to life after its death?” So Allah caused him to die for a hundred years; then He revived him. He said, “How long have you remained?” The man said, “I have remained a day or part of a day.” He said, “Rather, you have remained one hundred years. Look at your food and your drink; it has not changed with time. And look at your donkey; and We will make you a sign for the people. And look at the bones [of this donkey] - how We raise them and then We cover them with flesh.” And when it became clear to him, he said, “I know that Allah is over all things competent.”’ (*al-Baqara*: 259)

This is a true story as the Quran has told us of it, and it relates to the previous nations so that it might be a proof of Allah’s Power to raise the dead. It is the story of a man searching for the truth. Allah made him an example for himself first and foremost, and then for those that came after him. When he passed the village and it was in this decrepit state, it seemed unlikely to him that it and its people could be brought back to life once again. Allah *Glorified is He* made him die so that He could show him how He brings the dead to life. When the man said, ‘I have remained a day or part of a day’ he told the truth, and when Allah said: ‘Rather, you have remained one hundred years’ He told the truth. How? Because the bones of the donkey which had turned to dust showed it had been a hundred years, whereas his food which remained unchanged showed that it had only been a day or less. This is not strange, so long as the doer is Allah, the One Who contracts and the One Who expands. He is the Only One Who could bring together these seeming opposites. He can shorten time for one person and yet stretch it for another. Did He not order Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to strike the sea with his staff such that the water on each side became like a huge mountain. He also ordered him to strike the rock with his staff such that twelve springs burst forth from it. This is raw power. It is also strange that they should ask about their ancestors even though there is but one resurrection. Their asking, ‘And our forefathers [as well]?’ is a proof of their confusion. Perhaps they thought that those who had died recently were ‘fresh’ so to speak, and that it would be they who would be raised, but that it would be impossible for those who had died a long time ago to be resurrected.

Allah replies to them saying, 'Say!' i.e., tell them Muhammad at the top of your voice, 'Yes! They will be raised'. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* speaks as a trusted person, for he has been commanded to do so by Allah, who is completely capable of resurrecting the creation. 'Yes, and you will be [rendered] contemptible.'

You will be small, humbled, and humiliated in recompense for your arrogance, obstinacy, and disputation regarding the truth in this life. Allah *Glorified is He* says in another place, 'But they, that Day, are in surrender.' (*as-Saffat*: 26)

فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فَإِذَا هُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَقَالُوا يَوَيْلَنَا هَذَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ ﴿٢٠﴾
هَذَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

**Just one blast and — lo and behold! — they will look [19]
and say, 'Woe to us! This is the Day of Judgement' [20]
[It will be said], 'This is the Day of Decision, which
you used to deny [21] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 19 - 21)**

Regarding the verse 'But they, that Day, are in surrender', it refers to resurrection. 'Only one shout' means one blast enough to wake them from their graves, 'And at once they will be observing' because We will go to each one and wake him saying, 'wake up so-and-so'. The resurrection that you deny is easy for us; it will be no trouble at all. The shout by itself will not resurrect the dead; rather, it is permission for the angel to go and do his job. It is like the bell that announces the start of work. After it, 'at once they will be observing', that is, instantly. As soon as they stand up out of their graves, they will look here and there, for they will see amazing things, the likes of which they have not known and will be suddenly faced by the things they denied in this world. The Quran says in another verse, 'O our Lord! We have seen, and we have heard' (*as-Sajda*: 12); this is the first verse in the Quran to mention sight before hearing. The first thing to hit them will be the unprecedented sights and so they will stare at them. So they will see this spectacle, 'They will say, "O woe to us! This is the Day of Recompense."' [They will be told], "This is the Day of Judgement which you used to deny."

It is they who will say this, lamenting and wailing over themselves. It is not something we will say, it will be them. The realities have now been revealed to them and the corruption of their thought and lies have been exposed, as well

as the vehemence and obstinacy they displayed in this world. The first thing that will become clear to someone then will be the corrupt nature of his thought and the evil of his deeds. The first person he will blame will be himself, and he will lament over it. ‘This is the Day of Recompense.’ This is the recompense that they did not accept in this world but now they must acknowledge it.

Alternatively, this could mean that, ‘this is the day that religion benefits one’, as one might say to one’s child when going to an examination, ‘This is the day you have been revising for; the day in which nothing will benefit you except the revision you have done. Then they say, ‘This is the Day of Judgment which you used to deny.’

Judgment can only happen when there is some kind of dispute. The dispute in this case is between the messengers and those of their people who belied and opposed them. Disputation such as this is not solved by argumentation, because these disbelievers are steeped in obstinacy and vehemence. The use of the sword may also fail to end it in that the oppressor may die and yet justice has not been done. So, there must come a day of retribution and distinction in these quarrels. It is for this reason that a certain man said, ‘By Allah, an oppressor will not die until Allah takes His revenge from him’. Someone replied to him, ‘How could this be? So-and-so commits a great deal of oppression but we do not see anything happen to him’. ‘By Allah’, he replied, ‘after this abode is another in which he who excels will be rewarded for his excellence and he who does wrong will be repaid for his evil’. So, yes indeed, such a day is necessary, for otherwise a lot of the oppressor would be better than that of the oppressed.

أَحْشُرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَأَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
فَأَهْدُوهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَقِفُوهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ مَسْئُولُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

[Angels], gather together those who did wrong, and others like them, as well as what-ever they worshipped [22] beside God, lead them all to the path of Hell [23] and halt them for questioning [24] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 22-24)

That is, gather all those together in the fire, ‘those who committed wrong, their kinds, and what they used to worship other than Allah.’ Thus, the assembled

are of three types: those bent on evil doing (as a recompense); others like them and the things that they worshipped in place of Allah. Here the word 'kinds' means their partners in this life, like the wife who assists her husband in his oppression. An example of this would be the wife of Abu Lahab. An alternative meaning could be those like them and their companions who misguided them and lead them astray.

'And what they used to worship other than Allah' refers to the idols that they worshipped in place of Allah. They, too, will be gathered in the Fire so that the disbelievers might see the false gods they attached themselves to and worshipped precede them into the fire. Their hopes of salvation will be shattered. It will also expose the corruption of their ideas, in that they worshipped idols that could neither harm nor benefit them; this will be further clarification for them.

This clarification is expanded harshly in Allah's saying: 'and guide them to the path of Hellfire.' Can being thrown into the fire be termed 'guidance'? The meaning is 'Show them the way to Hell', mocking and deriding them.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And stop them; indeed, they are to be questioned', i.e. stop them for interrogation and accounting. This questioning, however, shall be individual, not collective. Each one of them will be questioned and interrogated alone. The scholars say regarding the questioning that people come to rebuke themselves before Allah comes to rebuke them; as soon as they see the resurrection and the place of accounting, they reproach themselves and start to regret at the time when regret no longer benefits.

﴿٢٥﴾ بَلْ هُمْ الْيَوْمَ مُّسْتَـَـسْلِمُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

“Why do you not support each other now?” [25] no indeed!

They will be in complete submission on that Day [26]

(The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 25-26)

This question is also by way of mockery and ridicule. That is to say, 'What is the matter with you now? Can you not help each other like you did in the world'?

The masses following their leaders and the leaders organising their followers, how similar they are in this situation to the proverb which says, 'birds of a

feather flock together’ or the saying, ‘The miserable and the hopeless will be united’. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says after this, ‘But they, that Day, are in surrender’; they are humbled, disgraced and humiliated. People say, ‘he raised the white flag’, meaning he had no strength left to defend himself, no logic or evidence. He is now submissive, small and humbled, awaiting Allah’s Judgement upon him.

وَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ قَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَأْتُونَنَا عَنِ الْيَمِينِ ﴿٢٨﴾ قَالُوا بَلْ لَمْ تَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ بَلْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا طَٰغِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

**And they will turn on one another accusingly [27] They will say,
‘You came to us from a position of power’ [28] They will say,
‘No! It was you who would not believe [29] we had no power
over you – and you were already exceeding all limits [30]
(The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 27-30)**

One should reflect upon this dialogue between the followers and their leaders. After their collective failure has become apparent and the realities that they denied for so long in the world have been revealed, they now attempt to shift the burden of responsibility on each other and start to argue about it. ‘They will say’, i.e. the followers, ‘Indeed, you used to come at us from the right.’ The right-hand side is the direction of goodness; this is why the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered us to prefer the right-hand side⁽¹⁾ in all things. We greet, eat, work, and write with it, because it is respected and honoured. Even the Arabs of old used to take good omens from the right-hand side if a bird flew in that direction.

The right is also the side of strength. Most people use their right-hand side, and are stronger with it. One time we were asked about people who use their left hands, should we prohibit them from that? We said that whether one uses one’s right or left hand is not merely a case of what one is used to, rather, it is also an aspect of one’s genetic makeup. There is a centre in the body which is responsible for distributing strength. Some people’s strength is

(1) *It was related by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih [168, 426, 538] on the authority of `Aisha Allah be pleased with her who said, ‘The Prophet peace and blessings be upon him used to begin with his right with his sandals, when dismounting, in his ablutions and in all his affairs.’*

distributed more to the right, and so his right is stronger than his left, some people are the opposite, and in some people their strength is distributed evenly, they can work just as well with their right or left. These people are known as ambidextrous, and 'Umar Allah be pleased with him was one of them. All these meanings are present in the meaning of this verse. 'They will say, "Indeed, you used to come at us from the right', i.e. from the direction of truth and goodness so that you might divert us from it; or by way of strength and power to force us to do things; or through oaths, meaning that you would swear to us that that was the right way, none other.

The leaders then respond to the followers, 'Rather, you [yourselves] were not believers' meaning we did not ruin your faith and lead you to disbelief, rather, you were already, by nature, disbelievers. All we had to do was point the way and you were following us, 'And we had over you no authority.' Authority can either be through strength and force of action or it can be the power of argument to convince somebody to disbelieve. So, they are saying, 'we had neither physical power over you nor a powerful argument to convince you, 'but you were' by your very nature, 'a transgressing people' overstepping the boundaries in misguidance and disbelief. This is the lesson Satan teaches to his followers in the next world when he disowns them and give up responsibility. Allah tells us, 'And Satan will say when the matter has been concluded, "Indeed, Allah had promised you the promise of truth. And I promised you, but I betrayed you. But I had no authority over you except that I invited you, and you responded to me. So do not blame me; but blame yourselves.'" (*Ibrahim: 22*)

فَحَقَّ عَلَيْنَا قَوْلُ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا لَذَائِقُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ فَأَغْوَيْنَاكُمْ إِنَّا كُنَّا غَاوِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾
فَإِنَّهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾

**Our Lord's sentence on us is just and we must all taste the
punishment [31] We led you astray as we ourselves were astray
[32] On that Day they will all share the torment [33] this is how
We deal with the guilty [34] (The Quran, as-Saffat: 31-34)**

Allah's saying, 'has come into effect' means it has come to pass; 'upon us', i.e. the leaders and their followers; the punishment has become necessary for all of them.

One should reflect upon their saying, ‘indeed, we will taste [punishment].’ They did not say ‘we are being punished’ or ‘we are being burnt’. Punishment or burning can end at any time, while tasting continues and lasts. This meaning is made clear in Allah’s saying, ‘Every time their skins are roasted through We will replace them with other skins so they may taste the punishment.’ (*an-Nisa*: 56) It has been discovered in these times that the skin is the locus of pain, not the brain. The proof of this is that if one takes an injection for instance, one feels pain as the needle punctures the skin but after that, no more. This is a reality that Allah *Glorified is He* has outlined for us in His saying, ‘Every time their skins are roasted through We will replace them with other skins.’ Why? ‘So they may taste the punishment’ because pain is experienced by the skin.

Regarding their saying, ‘And we led you to deviation’, it means, ‘we showed you the ways of error and misguidance’. The one in error is the one who strays from the path of truth and good. ‘Indeed, we were deviators’, means ‘If we ourselves were lost and misguided, why should we leave you to have faith and guidance. You too must drink from the same cup as us’. This is the logic of their teacher, Satan. When he disobeyed Allah and was cast out from His Mercy, he swore that he would misguide the offspring of Adam *peace be upon him* along with himself so that they might be like him in loss and misguidance. Then Allah *Glorified is He* brings this confrontation between the people of falsehood to a close and confirms the reality that, ‘So indeed they, that Day’, i.e. the Day of Judgement, ‘will be sharing in the punishment.’ This is our way with the people of misguidance, ‘Indeed, that is how We deal with the criminals.’ Those are who deny the primary basis of faith, Divine unity. That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* describes them in the following verse saying:

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَيَقُولُونَ آيُنَا
لَتَارِكُوا آلِهَتِنَا لِشَاعِرٍ مَّجْنُونٍ ﴿٣٦﴾ بَلْ جَاءَ بِالْحَقِّ وَصَدَّقَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

Whenever it was said to them, ‘There is no deity but God,’ they became arrogant [35] and said, ‘Are we to forsake our gods for a mad poet?’ [36] ‘No: he brought the truth and confirmed the earlier messengers [37] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 35 - 37)

‘They,’ i.e., the disbelievers whom Allah *Glorified is He* described as criminals, ‘when it was said to them, “There is no deity [worthy of worship] but Allah”

were arrogant', i.e. they would refuse to believe or accept it out of arrogance. 'And were saying, "Are we to leave our gods for a mad poet?" We would give up worshipping them for the sake of a mad poet or because he called us to do so. It is very strange that the Arabs, given that they were an oral nation, giving great value and appreciation to even a single word, when they know fully well the meaning of the word and the meaning of worship. Deity refers to something that is worshipped, but by what right are these idols worshipped? What did they order you to do? From what did they prohibit you? Where is the guidance that they brought you? Indeed, they knew that these were dead objects that could neither harm nor benefit them. They worshipped them because of the natural inclination towards religion that man has. Man, by his nature, is religious; he desires to draw closer to a power greater than himself to which he can flee when trouble strikes, a power that will help him to be patient and endure events. They found these deities to be ones that imposed no responsibilities and made no demands and thus they worshipped them instead of Allah. It is also strange that, given they were an oral nation, they failed to differentiate between Allah's Speech in the Quran and poetry, for they were the most knowledgeable of people regarding its rhymes and metres. How can poetry compare to Allah's Speech in the Quran?

Similarly, incomprehensible is how they could accuse the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of being insane, when they were fully acquainted with him, his attributes, his character, and his life among them before he was elected to prophethood. How distant insanity is from the one who has embodied all the finest qualities and most gracious characteristics. Madness is that a person acts in ways that are unintelligible. The crazy man does not differentiate between things; he does not know what is beneficial or what is harmful.

It is for this same reason that Allah *Glorified is He* says here, 'Rather', a word that is for contradiction of the preceding speech. 'The Prophet has come with the truth', i.e. that which is firm and unchanging; 'and confirmed the [previous] messengers' regarding the path of Allah.

Allah says:

إِنَّكُمْ لَذَاقُوا الْعَذَابِ الْأَلِيمِ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَمَا تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

You will taste the painful torment [38] and be repaid only according to your deeds [39] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 38 - 39)

In the preceding verses, Allah *Glorified is He* related the speech of the leaders of the oppressors to their followers but emphasis this meaning here except that here the type of tasting is specified, ‘Will be tasters of the painful punishment.’ This grievous suffering is not oppression or transgression, rather, it is the recompense for what they did previously, ‘although you shall not be requited for aught but what you were wont to do’ (*as-Saffat*: 39), and ‘And you will not be recompensed except for what you used to do.’ After this description of the people of disbelief and enmity, the obstinate, criminals and the clarification of their outcome and what awaits them of recompense, the True Lord *Glorified is He* follows this with a description of the believers who were sincere in their worship of Allah. This coupling of two opposites is one of the styles of the Quran, as for instance, in Allah’s saying, ‘Indeed, the righteous will be in pleasure. And indeed, the wicked will be in Hellfire.’ (*al-Infitar*: 13-14) It is through their opposites that things become clear. When one mentions something after its opposite, its good qualities become apparent, as in the saying of the poet⁽¹⁾ describing his beloved:

The face like the dawn is white,

The hair black like the night,

Two opposites improved when brought together,

For each shows up the good in its other⁽²⁾

That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks of what He has promised the true believers after what He has mentioned of the recompense of the

(1) Abu Ash-Shis Al-Khuza`i, Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah, a poet of quick wits and fine style... He was born in 130 A.H. in Kufa. He was less famous than his contemporaries Sari` Al-Ghawani and Abu Nawwas and was the cousin of Da`bl Al-Khuza`i. He went blind at the end of his life and was killed in the year 196 A.H. by a servant for keeping him in servitude. Al-Mawsu`a Ash-Shi`rya

(2) These two couplets are from a poem by Abu Ash-Shis Al-Khuza`i from Bahr Al-Kamil that has 66 couplets.

oppressors and deniers, so as to generate remorse in them, that it may be an extra punishment added to their suffering in the fire.

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ رَزَقٌ مَّعْلُومٌ ﴿٤١﴾ فَوَٰرِكُهُمْ مَّكْرُمُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾
 فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٤٣﴾ عَلَى سُرُرٍ مُّتَقَابِلِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾ يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِكُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ مِّن مَّعِينٍ ﴿٤٥﴾
 بَيِّنَاءٍ لَّدُنَّ لِلشَّرِبِِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾ لَا فِيهَا غَوْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ عَنْهَا يُنْزَفُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

Not so God's true servants [40] They will have familiar provisions [41] fruits – and will be honoured [42] in gardens of delight [43] seated on couches, facing one another [44] A drink will be passed round among them from a flowing spring [45] white, delicious to those who taste it [46] causing no headiness or intoxication [47] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 40 - 47)

What preceded this was a discussion of the recompense of the disbelievers, but this is an exception; 'But not the chosen servants of Allah', those whom Allah *Glorified is He* has made true and chosen to obey and worship Him. 'Those will have a provision determined' i.e., in the hereafter because the sustenance of this world is unknown. A person may strive and tire himself out in this world and yet be deprived of the fruits of his labour; his crops may fail and he may come out at a loss in his trade. We have an apportioned sustenance in this world, but we do not know what it is. In the next world, however, one's sustenance is specified and known, is unaltered by circumstances and never fails to materialise. This is the hereafter and one is with the Ultimate Cause *Glorified is He*. We defined sustenance earlier as being 'everything that one benefits from', even something prohibited that one partakes of is considered part of one's sustenance. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'O you who have believed, eat from the good things which We have provided for you.' (*al-Baqara*: 172)

The subject then moves to some of the wonderful details of this sustenance. The most important part of one's sustenance is the essential nutrition by which one's life is maintained, after that come the luxuries that make one's life easier. Here, however, the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not mention the necessities, He only speaks of the luxuries above, and beyond them; 'Fruits;

and they will be honoured.’ Even though in several other places He mentioned the necessities and then followed them with the fruits and luxuries, such as His saying, ‘That they may eat of His fruit. And their hands have not produced it...’ (*Ya Sin*: 35). So why did Allah suffice Himself with mentioning only the fruits here? The scholars say that it is because the speech here refers to the hereafter. Eating in the hereafter is not out of need for food, it is only for the pleasure and luxury of eating.

Alternatively, it could be said that, as long as Allah *Glorified is He* has guaranteed the luxuries for you, it goes without saying that He has guaranteed one’s essential nutrition. As for Allah’s saying, ‘and they will be honoured’ it means that the food will not just be thrown down before them as hay is thrown down for animals, for we have no intention to honour animals when feeding them. Rather, the sustenance of the believers will be provided in such a way that ‘...they will be honoured’ in ‘gardens of pleasure’ because this is the provision of a lover for His beloved.

They are ‘On thrones facing one another.’ They will not be burdened with the troubles of visiting one another. The thrones that they sit on will be facing one another such that if one desired to visit his brother he would immediately find him in front of him without needing to go anywhere. This is something which has been guaranteed. ‘There will be circulated among them a cup [of wine] from a flowing spring.’ In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* has further described those who will carry these cups, ‘There will circulate among them young boys made eternal. With vessels, pitchers and a cup [of wine] from a flowing spring.’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 17-18) This cup could refer to the wine or to the goblet into which the wine (from a flowing spring) is placed. This wine is then described as being ‘clear’ (*as-Saffat*: 46), and clear wine was considered to be the best type among the Arabs. It is ‘White and delicious to the drinkers.’ Allah did not say here delightful; rather, He said ‘delicious’, i.e. it is, in and of itself, delicious. It is as though deliciousness has been embodied in this drink. Allah *Glorified is He* described the wine of the hereafter as, ‘delicious to the drinkers, so as to differentiate between it and the wine of this world. We see in films that the alcoholic beverages of this world are not drunk for pleasure, for the people put a tiny bit in a cup and then they consume it in one go, drinking it reluctantly because of its awful taste. If, however, the alcoholic

beverages of this world are not drunk for the pleasure of consuming them, why do people do so? They drink because of the effect it has of impairing the intellect, the guarding of one's actions, etc. They want to break out and be free of this guardian. For this reason, the best types of alcohol in their reckoning, and we seek refuge with Allah, are those that render one careless among other things. As for the wine of the hereafter, the only thing it has in common with that of this world is the name. The wine of the hereafter is delicious, you feel it when you drink it, and you take it slowly, sip by sip, so that you can savour its sweetness. It does not corrupt one's intellect; 'no bad effect is there in it, nor from it will they be intoxicated.' It will not distort one's mind. Effect '...is there in it, nor from it will they be intoxicated.' Among the types of alcohol is that which is purgative when swallowed, such that it will cause the contents of the stomach to be expelled. As for the wine of the hereafter, it does not cause such sickness. An alternative meaning of 'nor from it will they be intoxicated' could be that their intellects are not sapped by it and they do not get intoxicated by it as they do on the wine of this world.⁽¹⁾ Allah then says:

وَعِنْدَهُمْ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ عَيْنٌ ﴿٤٨﴾ كَأَنَّهُنَّ بَيْضٌ مَّكُونٌ ﴿٤٩﴾

**With them will be spouses – modest of gaze and
beautiful of eye [48] like protected eggs [49]
(The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 48 - 49)**

This is a description of the women in paradise. They will be: '...modest of gaze...' (*as-Saffat*: 48). This means that these women look at none but their husbands. We have previously said that a man may give the most expensive things he possesses as a gift to another, such as a car, house, or clothes. As for one's wife, none accepts that any other person looks at her due to her high status as a person attached to his wife. Similarly, a man does not like his wife to look at other men. This is one of the traits of the women in paradise; they are '...modest of gaze...' (*as-Saffat*: 48). In another verse, wives are described

(1) Ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him said that it means 'they will not get intoxicated.' Mujahid said it meant, 'It will not cause any deficiency in their intellects.' This was related by Hunad, 'Abd ibn Hamid and Ibn Abu Hatim. It is also related on the authority of Sa'id ibn Jabir that it means, 'there is no harm in it nor anything unpleasant.' This was related by 'Abd ibn Hamid, Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abu Hatim, As-Suyuti mentioned these narrations in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* [7: 88].

as: ‘...Fair ones reserved in pavilions.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 72) This means that they are chaste and reserved only for their husbands. Allah guards the beauty of women and ensures that society will nurture chaste women so that people’s lineages may be preserved and noble. These are the standard traits for believing women in the worldly life and will be the same in the Hereafter. Allah comforts husbands regarding this peculiarity, as no one will share him his wife in the Hereafter, even by a glance.

The Arabic word ‘*in*’ is the plural of the word ‘*ayna*’ (having wide beautiful eyes), and the Arabs consider wide and beautiful eyes and small mouths as features of beautiful women.

The phrase: ‘With them...’ (*as-Saffat*: 48) means ‘in their possession’, as they are from the pleasures of paradise. If one needs anything from them, he gains it; if not then he may leave them, yet they will remain waiting for him. Allah describes them saying: ‘like protected eggs.’ (*as-Saffat*: 49) The word *bayd* is the plural of the word *baydah* (an egg) which refers to an ostrich egg⁽¹⁾ because they are the biggest eggs which have the best colour. It is said that the person who shelters beauty in his tribe that he shelters its egg. Therefore, eggs here are described as being so protected that no one has touched it.

فَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ إِنِّي كَانَ لِي قَرِينٌ ﴿٥١﴾
يَقُولُ أَأِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُصْذِقِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾ أَءِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظْمًا أَأَنَّا لَمَدِينُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

They will turn to one another with questions [50] One will say, ‘I had a close companion on earth [51] who used to ask me, “Do you really believe that [52] after we die and become dust and bone, we shall be brought for judgement?” [53] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 50 - 53)

We have known the argument that runs between the disbelievers in the fire. In these verses, Allah tells us about the dialogue that takes place between

(1) *Al-Hasan and Ibn Zayd* said, ‘They are like ostrich eggs. The ostriches protect them with feathers from the wind and the dust. They are yellowish white, which is the best colour for women’s complexion.’ This was narrated by *Al-Qurtubi* in his exegesis [8/5719] and *As-Suyuti* mentioned it in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* (7/89) attributing it to *Ibn Abu Hatim* on the authority of *Zayd ibn Aslam*.

the people of paradise. They ask each other about what happened to the oppressors and deluded people and where they are.

‘One of the people of Paradise will say: “I had a close companion on earth who used to ask me, ‘Do you really believe that after we die and become dust and bone, we shall be brought for judgement?’”’ (*as-Saffat*: 50-53) The question which was asked by the believer’s companion indicates belying and denial of resurrection and judgement.

قَالَ هَلْ أُنْتُمْ مُظْلِمُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ فَأَطْلَعَ فَأَرَاهُ فِي سَوَاءٍ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٥٥﴾ قَالَ تَاللَّهِ
إِنْ كِدَتْ لِتَزِيدِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَلَوْلَا نِعْمَةُ رَبِّي لَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

Then he will say, ‘Shall we look for him?’ [54] He will look down and see him in the midst of the fire [55] and say to him, ‘By God, you almost brought me to ruin! [56] Had it not been for the grace of my Lord, I too would have been taken to Hell [57] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 54-57)

The Quran creates such an image of this scenario that one can almost see and hear. While the people of paradise are busy asking each other about the misguided ones that they knew in the world, one of them looks and sees an acquaintance that denied the resurrection and judgement and tried to mislead him amongst the people of the fire. Therefore, he asks his Companions to look at such-and-such who is in the fire. ‘He will look down and see him in the midst of the fire.’ (*as-Saffat*: 55) The person seen in the fire has not hope to be saved. Upon seeing this, the believer remembers the blessing which Allah has bestowed on him, as He has saved him from the abyss of misguidance, to which his companion wanted to lead him. He addresses him, saying: ‘...By Allah, you almost brought me to ruin...’ (*as-Saffat*: 56) along with yourself, ‘Had it not been for the grace of my Lord...’ (*as-Saffat*: 57) the grace of saving me. ‘...I too would have been taken to Hell.’ (*as-Saffat*: 57) This means that he would have been among those whom the angels have gathered for punishment. At this point, the believers’ joy due to their faith increases as well as their gratitude and recognition of Allah’s blessings. Nothing can disturb their joy except the fear that they will eventually die and lose this bliss. So they say:

أَفَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَيِّتِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾ إِلَّا مَوْتَنَا الْأَوَّلَى وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَدِّيْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾
إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَالْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٦٠﴾ لِمِثْلِ هَذَا فَلْيَعْمَلِ الْعَامِلُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

Then he will say [to his blessed companions], ‘Are we never to die again after our earlier death? [58] Shall we never suffer? [59] This truly is the supreme triumph! [60] Everyone should strive to attain this [61] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 58 - 61)

Thus, they are apprehensive about losing this bliss asking each other, ‘Are we never to die again after our earlier death?’ (*as-Saffat*: 59) They wonder whether they will die again or not; ‘Shall we never suffer?’ (*as-Saffat*: 59) They ask whether there will be anything else for which they will be called to account or punished. His hope is to remain in this state of bliss so that he does not miss it either by death or by any other change for the worse. ‘This truly is...’ (*as-Saffat*: 60) continuous and everlasting bliss, which will not be followed by reckoning or punishment. That is ‘...the supreme triumph.’ (*as-Saffat*: 60) There can be no doubt that this is a goal that everyone should strive to attain. ‘Everyone should strive to attain this.’ (*as-Saffat*: 61) Allah gives us an account of these events that will take place in the afterlife in order to clarify for the effect of faith and the result of good deeds. He describes for us the events that will take place in the Hereafter so that we may take a lesson from them. Any deed that leads to such a blissful end can easily be done no matter how troublesome or tiring, as this will incur no loss.

أَذَلِكْ خَيْرٌ نَزْلًا أَمْ شَجَرَةُ الزَّقُّومِ ﴿٦٢﴾ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَهَا فِتْنَةً لِلظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾
إِنَّهَا شَجَرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِي أَصْلِ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٦٤﴾ طَلْعُهَا كَأَنَّهُ رُءُوسُ الشَّيَاطِينِ ﴿٦٥﴾

Is this the better welcome, or the tree of *Zaqqum* [62] which we have made a test for the evildoers? [63] This tree grows in the heart of the blazing fire [64] and its fruits are like devils’ heads [65] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 62 - 65)

These verses state the bliss of paradise and the punishment of the fire. It states again the description of hell and its punishments: ‘Is this...’ (*as-Saffat*: 62) the bliss of paradise stated above ‘...the better welcome...’ (*as-Saffat*: 62), as a

place of stay and hosting. *An-Nuzul* is the place that is prepared for an unexpected guest which has all the necessities of life such as food, drink, etc. Therefore, a hotel is called a *nuzul*. Hotels with all the facilities for relaxation are prepared by people for other people, so how could one imagine what Allah could prepare for people. Hospitality depends on the abilities of the host.

‘...or the tree of *Zaqqum*’ (*as-Saffat*: 62); what is the tree of *Zaqqum*? Allah describes it, saying: ‘which we have made a test for the evildoers’ (*as-Saffat*: 63). The Arabic word *fitnah* means tribulation and punishment. ‘This tree grows in the heart of the blazing fire.’ (*as-Saffat*: 64) This tree shows Allah’s Absolute Power, so one should not ask about how the tree grows in the middle of the fire because the One Who has created it is Allah *Glorified is He*. This should be viewed in the framework of Allah’s transcendence above the rules of creation.

Its fruits seem to be the heads of the devils. However, we have not seen the heads of devils. Therefore, some orientalists who try to find fault with the Quran wonder that Allah likens something unknown to us with something also unknown. We have not seen either the *Zaqqum* tree or the heads of the devils. Comparisons are made to clarify one thing by means of another. What is the benefit of comparing something unknown with another unknown thing? We say in reply that the human brain has the faculties of memory, recall, and imagination. A person first sees something, and then it is recorded in his memory at the part of consciousness. Then, he can recall that thing. As for imagination, it can take fragments of reality and create a new image that does not exist in reality. In the case of this verse: they ‘are like devils’ heads’ (*as-Saffat*: 65), though you have not seen a devil’s head, your imagination can create so horrible image for it that will be quite satisfactory to clarify the difference between the welcome that Allah has prepared for the believers in paradise and this tree the fruits of which resemble the devils’ heads. Allah has intended to compare between these two images and to give you the warning during the time when recompense is witnessed, not the time when denial is possible.

The tree of *Zaqqum* is a malignant tree that can be found in the region of Tuhama. Its odour is rank and its taste bitter. Allah has mentioned it as a likeness for the tree that grows in the heart of hell. Scholars say that this tree

is a chastisement for those being punished because they used to deny the resurrection and life after death, so Allah has made this grow in the midst of hell and carry their food, as their food is only its fruits. Trees imply water and greenery, and it is obvious that water and fire cannot be combined. This is a glimpse about the Absolute Power that they deny in the worldly life. Therefore, the presence of this tree in the midst of hell and the disbelievers' subsistence on its fruits and need for it is chastisement for them due to their denial of the resurrection. This reminds us of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* when he was thrown into the fire, yet Allah made it cool and safe for him, as Allah stopped the fire's feature of burning.

Allah *Glorified is He* wants to make sure that people understand the repulsive nature of this tree, even though the Arabs already know a tree by this name. They know its rank nature, foul smell, and evil taste. They know its paltry fruit, but no one has seen a fruit that is like the devils' heads. Thus, the objective is to reveal its evil nature and give people's imagination every opportunity to envisage its foul character. The fruit of any tree is the most beautiful part of the tree. As for this fruit, it is like devils' heads. A person can imagine how ugly, offensive, and repulsive it is. It is well known that the Arabs believed that the devils have the ugliest appearance, while the angels have the finest and most beautiful appearance. An example that explains this point is what the women said about Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*: '...Perfect is Allah! This is not a man; this is none but a noble angel.' (*Yusuf*: 31) The Quran took the beliefs of the Arabs into account in this metaphor; it uses an unknown image, but it is something that all people can imagine according to their standards of ugliness. If it used a specific example whose ugliness is known to all people, it would be likely that while some people would consider it to be ugly, others would not. Allah *Glorified is He* desired to create an image that would be considered ugly by everybody, as no one considers the devil as beautiful. If we bring all the caricaturists in the world and ask them to draw a picture of the devil, each one will draw the ugly image he has in his mind. You will not find two pictures that exactly resemble each other. Therefore, the fruit of the tree of *Zaqqum* is compared to the devils' heads in order to implant the idea of ugliness in everybody's mind. This image can make this tree repulsive to anyone.

The word *al-tal'* originally refers to the calyx that envelops the fruit in its beginning. It also refers to the sheath that encloses the fruit of the palm and its like. When the stalks come out and the shape of the fruit becomes plain, these fruits are called *balah* (dates) so long as they are green.

Dates have three stages: The first relates to their size; when they reach their final size, their colour is neutral, then they become red or yellow. During this stage, it is said the dates have become *`affar* or *zahw* (white or shiny). The second stage is when the dates become red or yellow, they are now known as *busr*. The third stage is relevant to their consistency, whether they become tender or dry, according to the environment. If it is hot and dry, the *busr* will be dry and will be called *tamr* (dates). If the environment is cool and humid, the dates will remain moist and are named *rutab*.

Then Allah says:

فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يَكُونُونَ مِنْهَا فَمَا يَكُونُونَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ ثُمَّ إِنَّ لَهُمْ عَلَيْهَا
لَشَوْبًا مِنْ حَمِيمٍ ﴿٦٧﴾ ثُمَّ إِنَّ مَرْجِعَهُمْ لَإِلَى الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٦٨﴾

**They will fill their bellies eating from it [66] then
drink scalding water on top of it [67] then return to
the blazing fire [68] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 66 - 68)**

Necessity will force them to have recourse to something so grievous and hateful to them because they will have no other food. 'They will fill their bellies eating from it...' (*as-Saffat*: 66). When they have filled their bellies with it, the fire therein will increase, so they will want a drink to extinguish this fire, but their drink will be boiling water (we seek refuge with Allah). 'Then drink scalding water on top of it.' (*as-Saffat*: 67). The Arabic word *`ash-shawb* means something mixed or blended, and *hamim* is boiling water. In another verse, their drink is called *ghislin*.⁽¹⁾ When they eat and drink, they will return to their punishment. 'Then return to the blazing fire.' (*as-Saffat*: 67) Allah clarifies the reason for this punishment and painful end, as this is only recompense for what they did.

(1) Allah Glorified is He says: 'nor any food except from the discharge of wounds.' (*al-Haqq*: 36)
The word *ghislin* means the suppuration of the people of the fire. *At-Tafsir Al-Muyassar*

إِنَّهُمْ أَفْوَاءٌ أَبَاءَهُمْ ضَالِّينَ ﴿٦٩﴾ فَهُمْ عَلَىٰ آثَرِهِمْ يُهْرَعُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

**They found their forefathers astray [69]
and rushed to follow in their footsteps – before the
disbelievers [70] [of Mecca] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 69 - 70)**

Their forefathers were misguided and they imitated them and hurried to follow their footsteps. ‘...and rushed to follow in their footsteps...’ (*as-Saffat*: 70). The word *yuhra`un* is in the passive tense, as its subject is not mentioned. Had this haste to follow their fathers been on their part, Allah would have said *yahra`un*. This shows that something is driving them to imitate their forefathers, and Allah does this to show us how aggressive evil is, as it involves no responsibility for a person and no barriers against his passions. Therefore, people rush into it and seek it. As for the path of truth and guidance, people do not tend to rush toward it because it restrains their passions and limits them to the framework that Allah has laid down. Thus, they imitate their fathers, even though they know they are astray, so that they may flee from legal responsibility. Allah let them take upon themselves: ‘And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], “Am I not your Lord?” They said, “Yes, we have testified.” [This] - lest you should say on the day of Resurrection, “Indeed, we were of this unaware.” Or [lest] you say, “It was only that our fathers associated [others in worship] with Allah before, and we were but descendants after them. Then would You destroy us for what the falsifiers have done?”’ (*al-A`raf*: 172-173) The Quran states their acknowledgement in many verses.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And when it is said to them, “Follow what Allah has revealed,” they say, “Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing....”’ (*al-Baqara*: 170) But Allah *Glorified is He* refutes them saying: ‘...Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided?’ (*al-Baqara*: 170)

Allah *Glorified is He* reveals that they are lying concerning these claims. If they followed their ancestors in general, they would follow the path of their forefather Adam *peace be upon him*. If they had done so, their offspring would

have imitated them, and people would have continued to follow Allah's religion. However, those people were only controlled by their passions and were conquered by their desires which diverted them from the path of their Lord and Creator. Is there not a person amongst them who is aware of this misguidance, refuses to follow it and searches for guidance?

وَلَقَدْ ضَلَّ قَبْلَهُمْ أَكْثَرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِمْ مُنْذِرِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾
فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُنْذَرِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾ إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾

Most men in the past went astray [71] even though We sent messengers to warn them [72] See how those who were warned met their end! [73] Not so the true servants of Allah [74]
(The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 71-74)

Allah's saying: 'Most men in the past went astray' (*as-Saffat*: 71) means that these people were not the first misguided people, as many of their predecessors went astray. This indicates that only a minority were believers while the majority were misguided. 'Even though We sent messengers to warn them.' (*as-Saffat*: 72) This means that Allah did not leave them in heedlessness, as He sent them messengers to warn them. There is immunity in the human soul that protects man from errors and sin, even if he is separated from people. If this immunity becomes weak and he goes against Allah's path, then the self-reproaching soul will call him to account and reprimand him until he repents. If he becomes used to sin and his self-reproaching soul becomes weak, he is no longer able to deter himself, and then society deters him by enjoining righteousness upon him and forbidding him from evil. The society that offers counsel through its members is described by Allah's saying: '...advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience.' (*al-'Asr*: 3) There is a difference between the Arabic words *wassu* and *tawasu*. The later means that the members of the society advise one another. Even a religious and believing society has members who differ in their uprightness and application of Allah's religion. There will always be people who become weak and go astray or become heedless, so they must find those in the society who will deter them and remind them so that they may return to the right way. If a society loses its deterrents and corruption becomes widespread, Allah sends a

new messenger with a new revelation. We know that messengers bring both glad tidings and warnings, but in the following verse, Allah mentions the warning: ‘Even though We sent messengers to warn them.’ (*as-Saffat*: 72) Scholars say that warding off harm is prioritised over bringing benefits. To clarify this issue, if someone throws an apple at you while another throws a rock at you, there is no doubt that you would defend yourself against the rock before taking the apple. Allah’s saying: ‘See how those who were warned met their end.’ (*as-Saffat*: 73) means that Allah urges those people to reflect upon the consequences of this warning; the messengers of Allah warned everyone, but did all people benefit from the warning? No, rather, some benefited from this warning and others turned away. Allah brings the following exception after this verse: ‘Not so the true servants of Allah.’ (*as-Saffat*: 74) The people whom Allah chose and purified to worship and obey Him benefit from the warning. After Allah tackled the prophets in general, saying, ‘Even though We sent messengers to warn them.’ (*as-Saffat*: 72), Allah mentioned them in some detail, saying:

وَلَقَدْ نَادَيْنَا نُوْحًا فَلْنَعْمَ الْمُجِيبُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٧٦﴾
وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُ هُمُ الْبَاقِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾ وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾ سَلَامٌ عَلَى نُوْحٍ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧٩﴾
إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾ إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ ثُمَّ أَعْرَفْنَا الْآخِرِينَ ﴿٨٢﴾

**Noah cried to Us, and how excellent was Our response! [75]
We saved him and his people from great distress [76] We let
his offspring remain on the earth [77] We let him be praised
by later generations [78] ‘Peace be upon Noah among all the
nations!’ [79] This is how We reward those who do good [80]
he was truly one of Our faithful servants [81] We drowned
the rest [82] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 75 - 82)**

However, why does Allah begin with Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*? Scholars said that his call to Allah was similar to that of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Nuh (Noah) and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what We enjoined upon Ibrahim (Abraham) and Musa (Moses) and `Isa (Jesus) - to establish the religion and

not be divided therein...' (*ash-Shura*: 13). Allah *Glorified is He* enjoined the instructions of religion upon Nuh (Noah) and other prophets. Some of these prophets were higher than him in rank, yet Allah has mentioned Nuh (Noah) first then the other prophets. The scholars said that Nuh (Noah) had some peculiarity in terms of the environment he found himself in and the people who believed in him. Those who believed in him were saved in the Ark, and were the only ones who existed in the whole world at that time. Therefore, it is as though his message was for all people because of these specific circumstances. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* on the other hand brought a message for all people but in non-specific circumstances.

In Allah's saying: 'Nuh (Noah) cried to Us ...' (*as-Saffat*: 75), the word *nadana* (cried to us) which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse indicates that Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* used every possible means to call his people, yet he did not succeed. This is proved by his saying in another verse: 'And Nuh (Noah) said, "My Lord, do not leave upon the earth from among the disbelievers an inhabitant. Indeed, if You leave them, they will mislead Your servants and not beget except [every] wicked one and [confirmed] disbeliever."' (*Nuh*: 26-27) Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* made this supplication against his people after despairing of them, and finding that the means that he may use to persuade his people to believe were insufficient. Therefore, he turned to Allah because He was the Only One capable of saving him from them. Therefore, he called Allah, Who sent him as a messenger, to help him and not to forsake him. This is the natural response of anyone seeking help; when a person faces danger which he cannot ward off by himself, he seeks help from the closest people to him. If he does not find anyone close to him, he will seek the help of someone distant. If he does not find anyone to help him, he asks Allah to help and save him. Then the response to this call comes: '...and how excellent was Our response!' (*as-Saffat*: 75) As Nuh (Noah) made an excellent supplication, he received an excellent response. Allah did not say: 'and how excellent was my response' because Allah answered Nuh (Noah) with His forces in the universe: the air, water, and angels. '...And none knows the forces of your Lord except Him...' (*al-Muddaththir*: 31). The result of this response was: 'We saved him and his people from great distress' (*as-Saffat*: 76). The orientalists wondered about this point as Allah caused

Nuh's (Noah's) son to die. In another verse, the story of Nuh (Noah) and his son, who disobeyed him and drowned with the other disbelievers. Nuh's (Noah's) intercession for him did not work: '...My Lord, indeed my son is of my family; and indeed, Your promise is true; and You are the most just of judges.' (*Hud*: 45)

This confusion is a result of the fact that many people forget that the real son ship with regard to prophets is not that of blood, but that which is relevant to faith. Therefore, Allah replied to Nuh (Noah) saying: '...O Nuh (Noah), indeed he is not of your family; indeed, he is [one whose] work was other than righteous...' (*Hud*: 46).

The criteria with regard to the prophets' sons are belief and faith, not blood and lineage. Thus, if one studies this verse closely, he will see that Allah does not reject him personally, rather, He rejects his deeds: '...he is [one whose] work was other than righteous...' (*Hud*: 46). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* also said in this regard, 'People will not come to me with their deeds, while you come to me with your ancestry and noble lineage.'⁽¹⁾ The phrase, '...from great distress' (*as-Saffat*: 76) refers to drowning. The Arabic word *karb* is something hateful that one cannot repel by oneself or with the help of those around him. If one has some kind of plan to get himself out of trouble, this is not called a *karb*. The calamity in this verse is furthermore described as being 'great', as no one is able to repel it. Water was pouring down and burst forth from beneath the ground until it covered the mountain peaks. Therefore, there was no way out.

It is well known that water is the mainstay of all living things and one of Allah's greatest blessings upon us, but if Allah wills, He can make water a punishment and a means of punishment. We have seen in the story of Prophet Musa (Moses) how Allah saved Musa (Moses) by means of water and destroyed Pharaoh with the very same water. Then, Allah's saying: '...We let his offspring remain on the earth' (*as-Saffat*: 77) refers to those who were

(1) *It is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him that the Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'O Fatima, rescue thyself from the fire, for I have no power (to protect you) from Allah in anything except this that I would sustain relationship with you.'* Related by Muslim in his *Sahih* (204), *Book of Faith*

with him on the Ark, and had believed in him. Allah's saying, 'We let him be praised by later generations.' (*as-Saffat*: 78) means that he was praised by all people coming after him.⁽¹⁾ 'Peace be upon Nuh (Noah) among all the nations.' (*as-Saffat*: 79)

When we listen to the story of this prophet who bore many difficulties for the sake of calling to Allah, and spent a long time doing so, far beyond the lives of normal people, all people should invoke peace upon him. This means that we ask Allah to grant him peace and safety. 'This is how We reward those who do good.' (*as-Saffat*: 80) Allah's way with His prophets is that He makes them victorious and let people praise them after their death. 'He was truly one of Our faithful servants.' (*as-Saffat*: 81) Then, Allah says: '...We drowned the rest.' (*as-Saffat*: 82), which refers to the disbelievers; the word 'rest' indicates contempt and disdain for them.

وَإِن مِّن شَيْعَةٍ إِلَّا زَكَّاهُمْ ۖ إِذْ جَاءَ رَبُّهُ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ ﴿٨٤﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لِأَيُّهَا وَقَوْمِي مَاذَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ أَفَكَاةَ إِلَٰهَةٍ دُونَ اللَّهِ تُرِيدُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾ فَمَا ظَنُّكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

Abraham was of the same faith [83] he came to his Lord with a devoted heart [84] He said to his father and his people, 'What are you worshipping? [85] How can you choose false gods instead of the true God? [86] So what is your opinion about the Lord of all the Worlds? [87] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 83 - 87)

Allah's says, 'Ibrahim (Abraham) was of the same faith.' (*as-Saffat*: 83) Ibrahim (Abraham) was of the same faith of Nuh (Noah) and one of his followers who followed his footsteps. The word *shi'a* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse refers to people who follow and believe in a person's ideas; they try to carry his message to everyone else, and are willing to bear harm for this sake. The name of the sect 'Shi'a' derived its name from this meaning. The difference between the *Shi'a* and *shiu'iyyah* (communism) is very obvious.

(1) *Al-Qurtubi* said in his exegesis of this verse (8/5729) that Allah caused him to be praised in each nation, as he is beloved to all. Even among the Magians there are those who say he was *Afridun*. 'It was related that the word means 'strifer' or the like.

Why does Allah *Glorified is He* start the line of prophets with Nuh (Noah) then Ibrahim (Abraham)?

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...he came to his Lord with a devoted heart.’ (*as-Saffat*: 84) The reason is the devotion of his heart, as this is the basis of belief and religion. The natural disposition upon which Allah created people is based on righteousness and purity. If some corruption afflicts this natural disposition, then it is done by man. Therefore, Allah has praised Ibrahim (Abraham) for his devoted and pure heart, as Allah says, ‘...he came to his Lord with a devoted heart.’ (*as-Saffat*: 84) His heart remained unchanged since it was first created. As he maintained the devotion and purity of his heart during the worldly life, he will be rewarded in the Hereafter, ‘The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children. But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 88-89) He maintained this initial state of the purity and devotion of heart by adhering to Allah’s path. Thus, he will meet Allah with a pure heart in the afterlife. Accordingly, Allah *Glorified is He* described Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* with the best possible description. Allah’s saying: ‘he came to his Lord...’ (*as-Saffat*: 84), implies that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) did not wait for a messenger to come and invite him, rather he drew close to Allah, reflected on the heavens and earth until he was guided to Allah. When Allah introduced Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) to the believers, he said: ‘Indeed, Ibrahim (Abraham) was a [comprehensive] leader, devoutly obedient to Allah...’ (*an-Nahl*: 120). We know that Allah created a variety of gifts and distributed them amongst people, so that everybody has some special gift. Accordingly, necessity will bind people with one another. As for Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* he had the talents of a complete nation. Therefore, he deserved to be shown Allah’s mighty dominion of the heavens and the earth. All people are satisfied with the material world, but Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* surpassed this world to the Realm of Dominion because he had stripped himself of certainty in anyone but Allah. The proof is that when he was thrown into the fire and the angel came to offer him help saying, ‘Do you need anything?’ Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) replied out of faith and certainty, ‘Nothing from you’, although it was in a time of difficulty and suffering. Allah’s saying: ‘He said to his father and his people, “What are you worshipping?”’ (*as-Saffat*: 85)

indicates Ibrahim's (Abraham's) purity and devotion of heart. He had something he was pleased with and loved, so he desired to transfer it to other people, especially his relatives, as they are the most deserving of one's goodness. Therefore, the first people Ibrahim (Abraham) called to Allah were his father and his people. 'He said to his father and his people, "What are you worshipping?"' (*as-Saffat*: 85) The phrase *li`abih* is mentioned ten times in the Quran, one of which is relevant to Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* in Allah's saying: '[Of these stories mention] when Joseph (Joseph) said to his father, "O my father, indeed I have seen [in a dream] eleven stars and the sun and the moon; I saw them prostrating to me."' (*Yusuf*: 4) The other nine are relevant to Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* starting from the chapter of *al-An'am* to the chapter of *al-Mumtahanah*. One of these nine instances combines the name with the description, saying: 'And [mention, O Muhammad], when Ibrahim (Abraham) said to his father Azar, "Do you take idols as deities? Indeed, I see you and your people to be in manifest error."' (*al-An'am*: 74)

In the other eight, the word *li`abih* (to his father) is mentioned without the name Azar. Thus, the name 'Azar' mentioned in this verse to indicate that if one qualifies a description with a name, then that description must be shared with another one with a different name. For example, imagine you desired to ask about somebody and you met his son in the street, you would say, 'Is your father around'? This is because his real father could possibly be meant by this question. However, if one asks, 'Is your father Muhammad around'? In this case, no doubt that you intend his uncle because you gave him a name to remove any confusion between the two examples

Therefore, Azar was not Ibrahim's (Abraham's) real father; rather, he was his uncle. There is nothing strange about this because the Quran refers to the uncle as a father, as in Allah's saying: 'Or were you witnesses when death approached Ya`qub (Jacob), when he said to his sons, "What will you worship after me?" They said, "We will worship your Allah and the Allah of your fathers, Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac) - one Allah. And we are Muslims [in submission] to Him."' (*al-Baqara*: 133) It is well known that Prophet Ismail (Ishmael) was Ishaq's (Isaac) brother, yet Allah described him as a father to Prophet Ya`qub (Jacob).

When calling his uncle and his people, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* asked them: ‘...What do you worship?’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 70) And in another verse: ‘...What are you worshipping?’ (*as-Saffat*: 85) And, ‘...What are these statues to which you are devoted?’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 52) The questions in the verses under discussion: ‘...What are you worshipping? How can you choose false gods instead of the true Allah?’ (*as-Saffat*: 85-86) are incredulous questions which are more effective than statements because while a statement can be denied outright, a question forces the opponent to acknowledge the issue. The word *al-ifk* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means the worst type of lies, as there are various levels of lies.

The scholars say that we must consider the object of the lie. If it concerns the most sublime truth relevant to the Divine Entity, it is considered the worst type of lie; as what is done by a person who claims that Allah has a partner. If the lie concerns a human being, its seriousness depends upon to the person the lie is relevant to. Thus, when ‘Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* was falsely accused and slandered, Allah called this incident ‘*ifk*’ because of the repulsive nature of the accusations and the lofty rank of the person to whom this lie is relevant. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Indeed, those who came with falsehood are a group among you...’ (*an-Nur*: 11). One of the meanings of *ifk* is to reverse its reality. For example, Allah says, ‘And the overturned towns He hurled down.’ (*an-Najm*: 53) The meaning of the verse under study is: Do you want false gods instead of Allah? ‘So, what is your opinion about the Lord of all the Worlds?’ (*as-Saffat*: 87) He asks them what they think about Allah. What aspect of His Divinity is it that displeases them? How do they deceive themselves and turn away from Him when He is the Lord of the worlds? Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘O mankind, what has deceived you concerning your Lord, the Generous.’ (*al-Infitar*: 6) Someone once said that it is as though Allah has dictated the reply to people: What has deceived people regarding their Lord is His Graciousness. In this regard, there is a story of a man who saw another praying in haste. He said to him, ‘By Allah, if you owed somebody five *dirhams*, would it be okay to give them to him all worn out?’ The man replied, ‘By Allah, if he is gracious, he will accept them without considering whether they are worn out or not’. Allah *Glorified is He* is surprised by those people who ascribe partners to Him although they are given

clear evidence that such a claim is false. Something can only be surprising when it contradicts with the way it should be. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says at the beginning of the chapter of *al-Baqara*: 'How can you disbelieve in Allah when you were lifeless and He brought you to life; then He will cause you to die, then He will bring you [back] to life, and then to Him you will be returned.' (*al-Baqara*: 28) Their attitude is surprising and incomprehensible.

Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* started to actualise Allah's saying: 'And thus did We show Ibrahim (Abraham) the realm of the heavens and the earth...' (*al-An'am*: 75). We have previously clarified the difference between the Arabic words *milk*, *mulk* and *malakut*.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَنظَرَ نَظْرَةً فِي النُّجُومِ ﴿٨٨﴾ فَقَالَ إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ ﴿٨٩﴾ فَتَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾ فَرَاغَ إِلَىٰ
 آلِهِمْ فَقَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٩١﴾ مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾ فَرَاغَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضَرْبًا بِالْيَمِينِ ﴿٩٣﴾
 فَأَقْبَلُوا إِلَيْهِ يَزْفُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ قَالَ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مَا تَنْحَسِبُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

Then he looked up to the stars [88] He said, 'I am sick,' [89] so [his people] turned away from him and left [90] He turned to their gods and said [91] 'Do you not eat? Why do you not speak?' [92] then he turned and struck them with his right arm [93] His people hurried towards him [94] but he said, 'How can you worship things you carve with your own hands [95] when it is Allah who has created you and all your handiwork? [96] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 88 - 96)

Allah's saying about Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: 'Then he looked up to the stars.' (*as-Saffat*: 88) refers to the first step Ibrahim (Abraham) took towards the Realm of Dominion. The look he took was not just a fast glance; rather, it was a thoughtful, examining gaze. The verb *nadhar* here carries the meaning of close and careful examination. For example, the saying, '*mas'ala fiha nazhar*' (This issue needs reflection). The singular of the word *najm* (stars) is *najm* which refers to anybody in the sky that emits light and does not reflect the light of the sun. Accordingly, the sun is a star. Allah's saying: 'Then he looked up to the stars.' (*as-Saffat*: 88) indicates that it was a

long and reflective look, as it included the planets, the moon and the sun. Thus, Allah expanded upon this look in another verse in the Quran, saying: ‘And thus did We show Ibrahim (Abraham) the realm of the heavens and the earth that he would be among the certain [in faith]. So when the night covered him [with darkness], he saw a star. He said, “This is my lord.” But when it set, he said, “I like not those that disappear. And when he saw the moon rising, he said, “This is my lord.” But when it set, he said, “Unless my Lord guides me, I will surely be among the people gone astray. And when he saw the sun rising, he said, “This is my lord; this is greater.” But when it set, he said, “O my people, indeed I am free from what you associate with Allah. Indeed, I have turned my face toward He who created the heavens and the earth, inclining toward truth, and I am not of those who associate others with Allah.”’ (al-An‘am: 75-79) Thus, Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) look at the stars was long and deliberative because it lasted from the rising of the planet until its setting, then from the rising of the moon until its setting, and from the rising of the sun until its setting. When Ibrahim (Abraham) saw that these things should not be worshipped, he said: ‘...I am sick...’ (as-Saffat: 89). Some scholars regard this as one of the artifices that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* practised upon his people, telling them that he was sick. They considered this illness to be physical,⁽¹⁾ but what he meant was that he was psychologically sick, as he was preoccupied with the unbearable burden of his people’s denial of Allah as a god. This issue exhausted him and gave him sleepless nights. This is the sickness that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* is mentally exhausted from over the people’s denial of Allah’s Divinity. Thus, Ibrahim (Abraham) was not looking at the stars searching for evidence to convince himself, rather he was looking for concrete proofs to convince his people.

What caused him to say to his people: ‘...I am sick’ (as-Saffat: 89)? Scholars said that this day was a festival in which Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) people

(1) They believed that his saying: ‘I am sick’ (as-Saffat: 89) meant that he was afflicted with the plague. Therefore, Allah said after this verse: ‘so [his people] turned away from him and left.’ (as-Saffat: 90) Ibn Abu Hatim related that Sufyan said regarding the verse: ‘I am sick’ (as-Saffat: 89) means afflicted with plague; people used to flee from those afflicted with the plague.’ *Ad-Dur Al-Manthur by As-Suyuti*, [7: 100]

gathered and he said that in order to find a chance to demolish the idols. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'so [his people] turned away from him and left.' (*as-Saffat*: 90) They left him. 'He turned to their gods and said, "Do you not eat?"' (*as-Saffat*: 91) The Arabic word *ragh*, means 'went quietly' so that no one would see him or 'slip away' like someone who wants to leave a gathering without being noticed. He took two steps then stopped. He hid behind something, and then he went away.

Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* slipped away in order to destroy their idols. Before he did so, he mocked them: '...Do you not eat? Why do you not speak?' (*as-Saffat*: 91) But they did not answer, so he said: 'Why do you not speak?' (*as-Saffat*: 92) ridiculing them.

Then, he struck them: 'then he turned and struck them with his right arm.' (*as-Saffat*: 93) We mentioned previously that the right is the side of strength, as Allah says: 'They will say, "Indeed, you used to come at us from the right."' (*as-Saffat*: 28) from the direction of power and compulsion. This means that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* started to smash them with all his strength. This breakage made a loud noise that some of the people heard it: 'people hurried towards him.' (*as-Saffat*: 94)

When he saw them: 'But he said, "How can you worship things you carve with your own hands?"' (*as-Saffat*: 95-96) His question here indicates amazement and disbelief. He asked them how they worship a god that they have carved from stone with your very own hands. Surely, they know better than anyone else about this. When they saw an idol falling, they placed it back up in its place; when it was broken, they fixed it, and when the rain swept it away and it rolled in the mud, they pulled it out. How can such an idol be worshipped instead of Allah the True Lord, Who created them and all that they knew?

Certainly, they had no answer to this question, nor any way to refute Ibrahim (Abraham) except by force. They had no logic or proof which they could use to defend their gods.

قَالُوا ابْنُوا لَهُ بُيُوتًا فَأَلْقُوهُ فِي الْجَحِيمِ
فَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَسْفَلِينَ

They said, ‘Build a pyre and throw him into the blazing fire.’ [97] They wanted to harm him, but We humiliated them [98] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 97 - 98)

We all know the story of the fire into which they lit and threw Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. This was their plan to deal with Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham). However, Allah would not abandon Ibrahim (Abraham), so He saved him from this plan. ‘Indeed, they are planning a plan. But I am planning a plan.’ (*at-Tariq*: 15-16)

Allah’s saying: ‘...but We humiliated them’ (*as-Saffat*: 97-98) does not mean that they were humiliated because they were disbelievers, but because they sought to overtop Ibrahim (Abraham) and were able to throw him into a blazing fire. Therefore, they thought that they overtopped him.

The reality of the situation was revealed to them shortly, as Allah’s major sign happened. If Allah willed, He would not let them catch Ibrahim (Abraham), or let rainfall in order to put the fire out, but Allah wanted to refute their arguments. Had Ibrahim (Abraham) fled from them, they would think that he would have been burnt if he had been caught. Had it rained they would have thought that it was a natural phenomenon out of their control. However, Ibrahim (Abraham) was thrown into the fire but he was saved because of Allah’s Command to the fire: ‘Allah said, “O fire, be coolness and safety upon Ibrahim (Abraham).”’ (*al-Anbiya*: 69)

It is Allah’s Command to the fire in its natural state and with its normal attributes to be cool and safe upon Ibrahim (Abraham) only. Allah said, ‘O fire, be coolness and safety upon Ibrahim (Abraham).’ (*al-Anbiya*: 69) What happened to the fire is similar to the tree of *Zaqqum* which appeared to be a green tree but, in fact, it was a burning fire.

This is how Allah *Glorified is He* humiliated them and made their scheme ineffective. They schemed and Allah schemed but a scheme is merited on the basis of its architect.

وَقَالَ إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي سَيِّدِينَ ﴿٩٩﴾ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٠٠﴾
فَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِغُلَامٍ حَلِيمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾

**He said, ‘I will go to my Lord: He is sure to guide me [99]
Lord, grant me a righteous son [100] So We gave him the
good news that he would have a patient son [101]
(The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 99 - 101)**

When Ibrahim (Abraham) found that there was no benefit in calling his people to believe in Allah, he said: ‘...I will go to my Lord: He is sure to guide me.’ (*as-Saffat*: 99) The meaning here is that he is going to advocate Allah’s religion, as his Lord is always with him and omnipresent. It can also mean that he was emigrating for the sake of Allah to another place where he would find people that respond to his call. As long as he was emigrating for the sake of his Lord, He would guide him to a good and appropriate place for his calling to Allah.

Then Ibrahim (Abraham) supplicated his Lord saying: ‘...Lord, grant me a righteous son.’ (*as-Saffat*: 101) This means that he supplicates his Lord to give his righteous offspring. When a prophet desired to have offspring, he did not merely want it as an extension of his lineage, or to have someone to leave inheritance for him. A prophet desired children to continue his calling to Allah after his death. Thus, Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* said: ‘Who will inherit me and inherit from the family of Ya’qub (Jacob). And make him, my Lord, pleasing [to You].’ (*Maryam*: 6)

It seems that it was difficult for Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* to accept that his life would not be long enough to continue calling to Allah’s religion, so he asked Allah to satisfy his desire by giving him a son to bear the responsibilities of prophethood after his death.

He said: ‘...Lord, grant me a righteous son.’ (*as-Saffat*: 100) What Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) said indicates that he wanted his offspring as well as other people’s offspring to be righteous. Therefore, his Lord answered his supplication: ‘So We gave him the good news that he would have a patient son.’ (*as-Saffat*: 101) The Arabic word *halim* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, refers to the person who is not provoked by anger

and remains patient as much as he can. *Hilm* (forbearance) can also mean leaving stubbornness and dispute even when one is right.

It was related that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: ‘I guarantee a house in paradise for one who gives up arguing, even if he is in the right....’⁽¹⁾ This person will have a palace in the outskirts of paradise and another in its middle, why? Because he believes that his Lord is Ever-Living and the Sustainer of [all] existence, neither drowsiness nor sleep overtakes Him. Therefore, He will judge between all people in all disputes and will give the oppressed his due right from the oppressor. People always resort to a powerful person to judge in their disputes. In the Egyptian dialect we say, ‘The one who has a father should have no worries’, so what about the one who resorts to his Lord? Thus, it is out of Allah’s Mercy that He enables His slaves to sleep to the extent that makes them feel relaxed, so that they become energetic for their work. He also asks them not to worry about anything, as their Lord does not sleep.

Regarding Allah’s saying: ‘so We gave him the good news that he would have a patient son’ (*as-Saffat*: 101), good news of something is usually given before this thing comes into existence. Allah describes him as a patient during his childhood. Forbearance is usually found in rational adults who can assess things properly. Thus, the distinction here is that this boy will be forbearing even while he is still a boy.

This forbearance was indeed manifested in the first major test that he faced, when his father said to him: ‘...Ibrahim (Abraham) said, “My son, I have seen myself sacrificing you in a dream. What do you think?”’ (*as-Saffat*: 102) The boy’s response at the time when his father said these words needs

(1) *It was related by Abu Dawud in his Sunnan (4800) on the authority of Abu `Umama Allah be pleased with him who said that Messenger Muhammad said: ‘I guarantee a house in paradise for one who gives up arguing, even if he is in the right; and I guarantee a home in the middle of paradise for one who abandons lying even for the sake of fun; and I guarantee a house in the highest part of paradise for one who has good manners.’ Rabd Al-Jannah, which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the Hadith, refers to the area around the edge of paradise like, for example, the buildings that lie around a city under its walls. It is also said that it means the middle of paradise. Lisan Al-'Arab under the root rabada*

contemplation. The boy said: 'Father, do as you are commanded and, Allah willing, you will find me steadfast.' (*as-Saffat*: 102) This is forbearance manifesting at this young age.

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعَىٰ قَالَ يَبْنَئِي إِنِّي أَرَىٰ فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَىٰ ۚ قَالَ يَآتَىٰ بِأَفْعَلٍ مَا تُؤْمَرُ ۖ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَنَدَيْنَاهُ أَنِ يَتَّبِعْهُمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾ قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْبَلَاءُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَفَدَيْنَاهُ بِذَبْحٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٠٧﴾

When the boy was old enough to work with his father, Abraham said, 'My son, I have seen myself sacrificing you⁽¹⁾ in a dream. What do you think?' He said, 'Father, do as you are commanded and, God willing, you will find me steadfast [102] When they had both submitted to God, and he had laid his son down on the side of his face [103] We called out to him, 'Abraham [104] you have fulfilled the dream.' This is how We reward those who do good [105] it was a test to prove [their true characters] [106] We ransomed his son with a momentous sacrifice [107] (*The Quran, as-Saffat*: 102 - 107)

The sequence here does not deal with Hajar *peace be upon her* nor her bearing of Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* rather, it moves directly to his reaching the stage of being able to share in his father's endeavours. Allah *Glorified is He* then says, 'And [one day,] when [the child] had become old

(1) There is some question as to who the one to be slaughtered was, Ismail (Ishmael) or Isحاق (Isaac) *peace be upon them* and there has been considerable disagreement regarding it. *Al-Qurtubi* mentions in his exegesis [8/5739-5741] three different positions the third of which, that of *Az-Zajjaj*, was that Allah is the one Who knows best who it was, but he was inclined to believe it was Isحاق (Isaac) *peace be upon him*. *Ibn-Kathir*, on the other hand, mentions in his exegesis [4/14-19] the proofs of each party. He proceeds to refute the proofs of those who claim it was Isحاق (Isaac) *peace be upon him* and insists that the true and correct position is that it was Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him*. It is even in the Torah that Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* was 13 years older than Isحاق (Isaac) *peace be upon him* and that Ibrahim (Abraham) was ordered to sacrifice his only virgin son. He also rejected the sayings that were attributed to the Companions. Whoever desires the details can look them up in their place. `Adil Abu Al--Ma`ati.

enough to share in his [father's] endeavours...' (*as-Saffat*: 102), because it is the True Lord *Glorified is He* who is speaking and narrating.

One of the aspects of rhetoric is to elide what is known of the sequence and this is one of the characteristic features of the Quran. In the story of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and the Hoopoe, Allah *the Exalted* says, 'Go with this my letter and convey it to them; and thereafter withdraw from them and see what [answer] they return.' (*an-Naml*: 28) He then removes much from the sequence of events and says, '[When the Queen had read Sulaiman's (Solomon's) letter,] she said: "O you nobles! A truly distinguished letter has been conveyed unto me."' (*an-Naml*: 29) He does not undertake to describe the journey of the Hoopoe, nor the way in which the address was sent to the queen.

Similarly here, 'Whereupon We gave him the glad tidings of a boy-child gentle [like himself] And [one day,] when [the child] had become old enough to share in his [father's] endeavours' (*as-Saffat*: 101-102). The fact that he has become old enough to share in his father's endeavours is evidence of his being the answer to Ibrahim's (Abraham's) prayer *peace be upon him*. The child was born and became old enough to help his father in his affairs. There is a difference between saying 'he reached the age of work', generally and 'he became old enough to share in his father's endeavours', because a boy is not given work to do except in accordance with his abilities, his strength, health, and capacity. At this time, Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* became old enough to share in just his father's endeavours because his father would be gentle and not task him with more than he could bear of good deeds and chores. The boy would do what he could and would leave what he could not to his father. Had he been with someone else he may well have charged him with more than he could handle.

So, when the boy reached this stage, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said, 'O my dear son! I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you...' (*as-Saffat*: 102). The meaning here is that, 'I saw in a dream that I am required to sacrifice you', not that the sacrifice was accomplished in the dream and that the matter is finished. The evidence for this is Ismail's (Ishmael's) reply, '... [Ismail (Ishmael)] answered: "O my father! Do as you

are bidden. You will find me, if Allah so wills, among those who are patient in adversity!” (*as-Saffat*: 102)

We should pause to reflect upon this manifestation of pure forbearance, and the eminence of his reply in this awesome test. ‘[Ismail (Ishmael)] answered: “O my father! Do as you are bidden...”’ (*as-Saffat*: 102), he did not say, ‘do as you like’; because his obedience to his father here is subsumed under his obedience to Allah *the Exalted*. He understands full well that his father is taking his orders from Allah, even if this order did come in the form of a vision. Hence, he knows, despite his youth, that the visions of the prophets are true revelation.

Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* calls his son, ‘...O my dear son (*ya bunayy*) ...’ (*as-Saffat*: 102), in the diminutive (*at-tasghir*); the Arabic word *bunayy* (dear son) is the diminutive of *ibn* (son); he did not merely say ‘*ya ibni*’; (my son). In this way, he reassured him of his paternal affection. He presented this test to his son while full of love and compassion for him, for his was still small. It is well known that the tenderness of a parent is in direct proportion to the needs of the child. That is why the Arabic woman said, when asked which of her children were most beloved to her she replied, ‘The sick one until he gets better, the absent one until he returns and the smallest one until he gets bigger.’⁽¹⁾

Thus, his saying, ‘O my dear son (*ya bunayy*)’ (*as-Saffat*: 102) means ‘I am not treating you here as an equal but as a child who needs his father’s affection, so take these orders in conjunction to my heartfelt paternal compassion’.

Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) saying, ‘consider, then’ (*as-Saffat*: 102), means think and reflect, ‘what would be your view’ (*as-Saffat*: 102), i.e. about your vision. It thus appears that there are two things sought of this child; one relating to his father and one relating to his father’s Lord. So, in: ‘O my father, do as you are bidden...’ (*as-Saffat*: 102). ‘Do’ relates to his obedience to his father, and: ‘as you are bidden’ (*as-Saffat*: 102) relates to his obedience to his father’s Lord.

(1) *This is attributed to Hudha ibn-`Ali Al-Hanafî to Khosrou in Al-`Iqd Al-Farîd by Ibn-`Abd Rabbu, Al-Kamil by Al-Mubarrad, Al-Mustaḡsa Fi Amthal Al-`Arab by Az-Zamakhshari, and in Majma` Al-Amthal by Al-Maydani. It is also attributed to Ghaylan ibn-Salama Ath-Thaqafî in Al-Aghani by Ab Al-Faraj Al-Asfahani and in Muḥadarat Al-`Udaba` by Ar-Raghib Al-Asbahani.*

Then Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* confirms that, despite his youth, he understands the circumstances of this test saying, ‘...you will find me, if Allah so wills, among those who are patient...’ (*as-Saffat*: 102), i.e. in the face of this tribulation, Allah’s saying, ‘But as soon as the two had surrendered themselves...’ (*as-Saffat*: 103) refers to Allah’s Commandment; each one had submitted his reins, as it were, to Allah. Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was ready to sacrifice, and Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* was ready to yield, saying to his father, ‘...you will find me, if Allah so wills, among those who are patient...’ (*as-Saffat*: 102).

Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) tribulation is multiplied this time. He was tested when he was a youth, when he was thrown into the fire, and he passed the test. This time he is being tested as an old man; he now has a child in his old age, he is more beloved to him than his own self, and he has been ordered to kill him.

It was possible for Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* to kill him while he was unaware, without telling him about the whole affair but he wanted him to share in the reward, for otherwise he would be sacrificing him for no reason and it would torment his heart.

Allah’s saying, ‘and Ibrahim (Abraham) had laid him down on his face’ (*as-Saffat*: 103) means that he put him down on his forehead, or face down. The scholars say that this was the result of consultation with his son, so that his father would not see his son’s face while he was slaughtering him, and thus be overcome by compassion and not fulfil the sacrifice. Thus, it was that the boy helped his father to fulfil his duty and fully manifested his submission.

So, the boy is lain out on the earth and his father has a knife in his hand and is actually trying to sacrifice his son; and which son is this? It is his only son whom he was given in old age.

The tribulation here is not so much that his son would die but that his father was to slaughter him with his very own hand; it would not be at the hand of some other person. Further that he was sacrificing him based upon a vision, not a clear order. That is why we said his tribulation was multiplied, for it had many aspects. Yet Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son *peace be upon them* passed the test successfully and thus deserved to have Allah say of him, ‘Verily, Ibrahim (Abraham) was a man who combined within himself all virtues...’ (*an-Nahl*: 120).

So, when Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son *peace be upon them* reached this degree of submission: ‘We called out to him: ‘O Ibrahim (Abraham)!’” (*as-Saffat*: 104) It is as though Allah was monitoring the submission of these two slaves who had been truthful to Him. Hence reprieve came to them from Him. ‘We called out to him: “O Ibrahim (Abraham)! You have already fulfilled [the purpose of] that dream-vision!” Thus, verily, do We reward the doers of good; for, behold, all this was indeed a trial, clear in itself.’ (*as-Saffat*: 104-106), i.e. ‘Restrain your hand, O Ibrahim (Abraham), from sacrificing your only son’. This was nothing but a trial; clearly severe upon Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son *peace be upon them* yet illuminating because it manifested the strength of Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) belief when taking orders from Allah, even though they may be difficult and harsh, and his yielding and obedience to those orders. The tribulation of his son who had to submit and obey was the same.

Then the ransom came: ‘And We ransomed him with a tremendous sacrifice’ (*as-Saffat*: 107). The word *dhibh* (sacrifice) here refers to the thing sacrificed (*madhbuh*), and that was the ram that Allah *Glorified is He* sent down as a replacement for Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him*.

وَتَرْكُنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ سَلَّمَ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿١٠٩﴾
كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١١٠﴾ إِنَّهُ مِن عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١١﴾

**And We let him be praised by succeeding generations [108]
‘Peace be upon Abraham!’ [109] This is how We reward
those who do good [110] truly he was one of Our faithful
servants [111] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 108 - 111)**

Thus, did Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* earn this rank among all the nations who came after him; that all should pray for him *peace be upon him* whenever he is mentioned saying, ‘Peace be upon Ibrahim (Abraham)!’ (*as-Saffat*: 109) Had Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* actually sacrificed his son it would have become an example for those who came after him, and people would have sought to draw closer to Allah by sacrificing their sons. But because Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was patient and submitted to the command of his Lord, Allah gave him reprieve. He and his son

were relieved of this tribulation and consequently we too were all relieved of this matter. Hence, every time he is mentioned we say, ‘peace be upon him’.

Allah’s saying, ‘Thus do We reward the doers of good (*al-muhsinin*)’ (*as-Saffat*: 110) means that just as we treated Ibrahim (Abraham) we treat every *muhsin* (doer of good). The *muhsin* is the one who does not stop at what has been made obligatory for him but goes beyond that to add more of the same. The True Lord *Glorified is He* has made five prayers obligatory upon us through the course of the day and the night, whoever adds to that has a portion of *ihsan* (excellence). Similarly, Allah has made *zakat* obligatory upon us, whoever gives wealth over and above this has a portion of *ihsan* (excellence). Allah *Glorified is He* says in the chapter of *adh-Dhariyat*, ‘[But] behold, the Allah-conscious will find themselves amid gardens and springs, enjoying all that their Lord will have granted them [because], verily, they were doers of good in the past.’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 15-16), i.e. they gave more than was obligatory upon them of the same kind.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* mentions some of the ways to perform such excellence: ‘They would lie asleep during but a small part of the night, and would pray for forgiveness before the dawn 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*: 17-19) The ‘doer of good’ earns this reward because by giving more than was sought of him he has shown that he loves what he has been tasked with, and that he knows that Allah has tasked him with less than he deserves and so he has given more.

وَبَشِّرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَاقَ نَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾ وَبَارَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَىٰ
إِسْحَاقَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ وَظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ مُبِينٌ ﴿١١٣﴾

We gave Abraham the good news of Isaac – a prophet and a righteous man [112] and blessed him and Isaac too: some of their offspring were good, but some clearly wronged themselves [113] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 112 - 113)

All these gifts are the consequence of the surrender mentioned in the verse: ‘But as soon as the two had surrendered themselves to [what they thought to

be] the will of Allah, and Ibrahim (Abraham) had laid him down on his face' (*as-Saffat*: 103). The trial that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* underwent was composed of three points: losing the son which had come to him in old age, that he was to kill him with his own hand and that he should kill his son based upon a vision. The reward that came to him thus came in proportion to the difficulties that he faced in these tests.

'And We ransomed him with a tremendous sacrifice' (*as-Saffat*: 107). The ransom mentioned here was Ismail's (Ishmael's) ransom; such that he might live and not be sacrificed. After this Allah *Glorified is He* gave Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* more in the form of Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon him*; 'And [in time] We gave him the glad tiding of Ishaq (Isaac), [who, too, would be] a prophet, one of the righteous' (*as-Saffat*: 112). Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon him* was also a prophet. In another verse Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...and, after Ishaq (Isaac), of [his son] Ya'qub (Jacob)' (*Hud*: 71). Ya'qub (Jacob) *peace be upon him* was also a prophet. All this good then was the result of his submission to Allah *the Exalted* and contentment with His judgement. The poet⁽¹⁾ spoke the truth when he said:

Submit to your Lord in His judgement, He judges with wisdom,

And so you may be safe and benefit.

Remember the Friend of Allah, sacrificing his son,

When his Creator said, 'And when they had submitted'.

Allah increases His gifts saying, 'and We blessed him and Ishaq (Isaac)...' (*as-Saffat*: 113). When the True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks of their descendants however He says, '...but among the offspring of these two there were [destined] to be both doers of good and such as would glaringly sin against themselves' (*as-Saffat*: 113), i.e. there would be good and evil sorts among his descendants.

In these verses, the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* is related to us in brief such that not everything has been mentioned. We should mention here the conflict between the religions regarding the person who was to be sacrificed. The Muslims believe that it was Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him*

(1) This poetry is by Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawi *Allah rest his soul*.

and the non-Muslims say it was Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon him*. This latter opinion however is to be rejected for a number of reasons:

Firstly, had it been Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon him* the sacrifice, ransom and what relates to them of ceremonial rights would be those of the locale which in the case of Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon him* was the Levant. Yet they were those of the Arabian Peninsula where Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* was born and raised. This is a location-based proof that the one to be sacrificed was Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him*.

Secondly, we have a proof from the Hadith of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* when he said, 'I am the son of the two to be sacrificed'. These 'two to be sacrificed' means the two who were ransomed from sacrifice. The first of these was `Abdullah, the father of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. His father ransomed him with a sacrifice of a hundred camels. As for the second, it was Ismail's (Ishmael's) Lord who ransomed him with a ram.

If others reject these proofs because they do not believe in them then we must give them proof from their own books, for people will only trust that which they have faith in. If a Muslim were to swear to a non-Muslim by *al-Lat* and *al-'Uzza* (Pre-Islamic idols that were worshiped), the latter would not believe him because he knows that Muslims do not believe in them and people only swear by things they esteem. However, if you said, 'by Allah!' then he would believe you.

That is why we have the following proof from the Torah for the non-Muslims, because that is what they believe in. Allah has preserved for us in the previous books some things which support that which has come in the Quran. These things are still present today; it is as if Allah blinded them to them so that there would remain in their own books proofs to the reality which they deny.

They should read Genesis 2: 22, 'Then He said to Ibrahim (Abraham) "Take now your only son, and go to the Mount of Moriah, and present him there as a burnt offering to me."' When was Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon him* an only son, given that he was born when Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* was 14 years old? In chapter 24 of Genesis we read, 'Ismail (Ishmael) was 14 years old when Ishaq (Isaac) was born.'

وَلَقَدْ مَنَّا عَلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَخَيَّرْنَاهُمَا وَقَوْمَهُمَا مِنَ الْكَرْبِ
 الْعَظِيمِ ﴿١١٥﴾ وَنَصَرْنَاهُمْ فَكَانُوا هُمُ الْفَائِزِينَ ﴿١١٦﴾ وَءَاتَيْنَاهُمَا الْكِتَابَ
 الْمُسْتَبِينَ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَهَدَيْنَاهُمَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿١١٨﴾ وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِمَا فِي
 الْآخِرِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾ سَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ
 نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٢١﴾ إِنَّمَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

We also bestowed Our favour on Moses and Aaron [114]
 We saved them and their people from great distress [115]
 We helped them, so they were the ones to succeed [116]
 We gave them the Scripture that makes things clear [117]
 We guided them to the right path [118] We let them be praised
 by succeeding generations [119] Peace be upon Moses and
 Aaron! [120] This is how We reward those who do good [121]
 truly they were among Our faithful servants [122]
 (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 114 - 122)

This is the succession of the ‘Resolute’ among the messengers. Having told us of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* the Quran now tells us of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. ‘Thus, indeed, did We bestow Our favour upon Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron)’ (*as-Saffat*: 114). Allah *Glorified is He* gave Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* a great gift whereby he made the pair of them messengers to the children of Israel; He also gave them the gift of victory when He made them triumphant over Pharaoh and his armies.

‘And We saved them and their people from the awesome calamity’ (*as-Saffat*: 115), i.e. Pharaoh himself. Allah described him as ‘the awesome calamity’ because Pharaoh was a man who did not reign over his people like a king, but rather as if he were a god. He formed schemes against Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and against his people in Egypt, such that he used them as servants, labourers and magicians.

The word pharaoh is used to describe the kings of ancient Egypt; each of them was called a pharaoh. Despite this in the chapter of *Yusuf* the ruler of Egypt is referred to as *Al-`Aziz*. Why? The scholars say that after the Rosetta

stone was deciphered we learnt that when the Hyksos invaded Egypt there were kings there, not pharaohs. When the Pharaohs took over the children of Israel fell into the service of Pharaoh because they have previously been aligned with the Hyksos, so Pharaoh and his helpers persecuted them.

‘And We saved them and their people from the awesome calamity’ (*as-Saffat*: 115), i.e. Pharaoh, and also The Exodus, when they set out with Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and Pharaoh and his army caught up with them and surrounded them by the sea, such that the sea was in front of them and Pharaoh’s army was behind them. This situation was very similar to the situation of Tariq ibn-Ziyad during the conquest of Andalucia when he said, ‘Verily the sea is in front of you and the enemy is behind.’

When this happened the children of Israel felt certain that Pharaoh would get them and said to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* ‘...Behold, we shall certainly be overtaken [and defeated]!’ (*ash-Shu‘ara’*: 61) because all available evidence pointed to this conclusion. According to the laws of nature they were done for, yet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and his Lord worked according to a different law. Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* began to say at the top of his voice, ‘No!’ meaning, ‘no we are not done for’. He said it on the basis of his trust in his Lord and his storehouse of faith: ‘He replied: “Nay indeed! My Lord is with me, [and] He will guide me!”’ (*ash-Shu‘ara’*: 62), and indeed relief came at that very instant. His Lord ordered him to strike the sea with his stick, and the rest of the story is well known.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And succoured them, so that [in the end] it was they who achieved victory.’ (*as-Saffat*: 116); what a victory it was! There is a considerable difference between beating one’s enemy and yet he remains alive and well, and beating him in such a way that he is wiped off of the face of the earth. In the events between Musa (Moses) and Pharaoh Allah *Glorified is He* passed an irrevocable judgement on Pharaoh and his army.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And We gave them the Book that made [right and wrong] distinct (*mustabin*)’ (*as-Saffat*: 117). The Arabic word *mustabin* in this verse means that which reaches the acme of clarification. The ‘Book’ referred to is the Torah. The True Lord *Glorified is He* described the Torah in another place saying, ‘And, indeed, We vouchsafed unto Musa (Moses)

and Harun (Aaron) [Our revelation as] the standard by which to discern the true from the false, and as a [guiding] light and a reminder for the Allah-conscious.' (*al-Anbiya*': 48)

Allah's saying, 'and guided them the straightway' (*as-Saffat*: 118) means the path of uprightness that leads to Allah *Glorified is He* via the shortest possible route. 'And left them thus to be remembered among later generations: Peace be upon *Musa* (Moses) and Harun (Aaron)!' (*as-Saffat*: 119-120), i.e. we caused them to be remembered well by those who came after them such that all those who hear the story of *Musa* (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* their trials and their steadfastness upon the truth pray for peace upon them. 'Thus do We reward the doers of good' (*as-Saffat*: 121), i.e. *Musa* (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them*.

It is well known that Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* became a prophet by means of *Musa*'s (Moses's) request when he said to his Lord, 'And my brother Harun (Aaron) – he is far better in speech than I am. Send him with me, therefore, as a helper, so that he might [more eloquently] bear witness to my speaking the truth: for I fear indeed that they will give me the lie.' (*al-Qasas*: 34) Allah *Glorified is He* answered *Musa*'s (Moses's) prayer and aided him by means of his brother *Harun* (Aaron), making the two of them as one messenger to the children of Israel. The Quran clarifies this issue for us that they were indeed as one messenger. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And *Musa* (Moses) prayed: "O our Lord! Verily, You have granted splendour and riches, 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 your path! O our Lord! Wipe out their riches, and harden their hearts, so that they may not attain to faith ere they see the grievous suffering [that awaits them]!"' (*Yunus*: 88) The True Lord *Glorified is He* replies to them saying, 'Accepted is your prayer...' (*Yunus*: 89), even though it was *Musa* (Moses) *peace be upon him* alone who prayed to Allah. [Allah] answered: 'Accepted is your prayer...' (*Yunus*: 89), i.e. *Musa* (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* because in the realm of prophethood they are one; neither can be separated⁽¹⁾ from the

(1) This is according to Ibn-Kathir in his *Tafsir*, was the opinion of Abu Al- 'Aliya, Abu-Saleh, 'Ikrima, Muhammad ibn Ka'b Al-Qarzi, and Ar-Rabi' ibn Anas. [2/429]

other; the prayer of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* is the prayer of Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him*.

Some scholars sought to make this matter easier to understand, explaining it by saying that Allah *Glorified is He* answered Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* saying, ‘Accepted is your prayer’ (*Yunus*: 89) because while Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* prayed Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* said ‘Amen’ and the one who says amen is in reality one of those praying. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says of Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* ‘for those two were truly among Our believing servants.’ (*as-Saffat*: 122)

The Quran then moves to speak about another prophet, Prophet Elijah *peace be upon him*:

وَلِإِيلَاسَ لِمَنِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَأَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ أَتَدْعُونَ بَعْلًا ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَتَذَرُونَ أَحْسَنَ الْخَالِقِينَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ اللَّهَ رَبَّكُمْ وَرَبَّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

Elijah too was one of the messengers [123] He said to his people, ‘Have you no fear of God? [124] How can you invoke Baal and forsake the Most Gracious Creator [125] Allah, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers? [126] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 123 - 126)

The name Ilyas (Elijah) *peace be upon him* is generally written with a *sin* at the end, but it can also be written using the actual name of the letter *sin* at the end instead; it thus becomes Ilyasin. Thus, there are two names for this one noble prophet; we can refer to him as Ilyas or Ilyasin. He is not however to be confused with Alyasa *peace be upon him*.

These verses clarify that Ilyas came to renew the belief in Allah, not to bring a Divine Law. He came to rectify the pinnacle of belief which is faith in the necessarily existent Allah; the One Who alone is to be supplicated. Indeed, the whole procession of Divine Messages since Adam *peace be upon him* came to correct this relationship between the creation and their Creator.

To this end He reminds you that He is the Creator and the All-Provider; that He is the All Knowing, the All-Powerful, the Wise, the Almighty etc. It is

He who has created you and bestowed His blessing upon you so that you might accept His commands gladly and turn to Him in tranquillity. If your worship of Him is not the result of the blessings He has given you and prepared for you before your existence, then it will not be out of fear of His punishment when you return to Him.

In Allah's saying, '...Will you not (*ala*) remain conscious of Allah?' (*as-Saffat*: 124), the Arabic word (*ala*) will you not is used to encourage and incite people to piety. It can also be used to make offers, as when one says, 'Would you like such-and-such?' Allah's saying, 'Will you invoke *Baal*...' (*as-Saffat*: 125), refers to an idol named *Baal*, 'and forsake' (*as-Saffat*: 125), i.e. neglect, '...the best of artisans' (*as-Saffat*: 125).

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* describes Himself as: '...the best of creators' (*as-Saffat*: 125), it means that He *Glorified is He* does not begrudge his slaves the attribute of being creators. Hence the person who reflects on creation and invents something beneficial for society is a creator because he made something new that did not previously exist. While he is a creator, Allah is the best of creators because He creates things out of pure nothingness; we however can only create things using pre-existent materials. Allah's creation contains life, growth and movement, etc. whereas our creations are immotile and stuck in a fixed state and we have previously differentiated between these two.

We may pause to reflect here: The True Lord *Glorified is He* upbraids them for worshipping idols and leaving the worship of Allah, but He did not say, 'and forsake Allah', rather, He said, '...and forsake the best of creators' (*as-Saffat*: 125). He mentioned an attribute that arouses adoration and proves His right *Glorified is He* to be worshipped. Allah *Glorified is He* continues as if they had asked, 'and who is the best of creators?' saying, 'Allah, your Lord and the Lord of your forebears of old?' (*as-Saffat*: 126) 'I am the best of creators, I am your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers, the One Who deserves to be worshipped'. But what was their answer?

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿١٢٨﴾
وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ ﴿١٢٩﴾ سَلَامٌ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿١٣٠﴾
إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾ إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٢﴾

But they rejected him. They will be brought to punishment as a consequence [127] not so the true servants of God [128]

We let him be praised by succeeding generations [129]

Peace be to Elijah! [130] This is how We reward those who do good [131] truly he was one of Our faithful servants [132]

(The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 127 - 132)

Allah says, ‘But they gave him the lie...’ (*as-Saffat*: 127), like all the peoples unto whom messengers came, seeking to take them from darkness to light. It is inevitable that messengers should be rejected; the corrupt and those who benefit from corruption reject them, and the leaders of the people and their dignitaries reject them so that their leadership, power, and exploitation of the weak may continue. ‘But they gave him the lie: and therefore they will most surely be arraigned [on Judgment Day]’ (*as-Saffat*: 127), i.e. on the Day of Judgement the angels of punishment will gather them together. The meaning then is: ‘Do not think that you will escape Our grasp because you will be brought back to Us’. Allah *Glorified is He* also says in this vein, ‘Did you, then, think that We created you in mere idle play, and that you would not have to return to Us’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 115). Allah’s saying, ‘excepting only [those who were] Allah’s true servants’ (*as-Saffat*: 128) refers to those whom He chose to obey and worship Him.

This brief story about this noble prophet is then brought to a close in the same way as those that preceded it: ‘and him We left thus to be remembered among later generations. Peace be upon Ilyas (Elijah) and his followers! Verily, thus do We reward the doers of good for he was truly one of Our believing servants!’ (*as-Saffat*: 129-132) We understand from these closing verses that *ihsan* (doing good) is an offshoot of faith, meaning that nobody can be a *muhsin* (a doer of good) without having faith first.

This is how the Quran has summarised the story of this prophet for us and clarified that he came, not with a legal system, but to rectify people’s belief.

He came to correct the foundation upon which life is based. Indeed, this was the task of all messengers since Adam *peace be upon him*. Allah created Adam *peace be upon him* the father of mankind, as His vicegerent on earth. Man being Allah's vicegerent on earth means that he performs duties on earth for the True Lord *Glorified is He*. In order that he might carry out these duties, Allah granted him certain attributes similar to His. Yet these attributes are gifts that have been granted; they are not fundamental attributes of the vicegerent; this is why the Creator can take them away at any time. Allah *the Exalted*, however, is the Necessarily Existent, the Most High and it is His Quintessence that is characterised by these attributes. Allah is Powerful and extends power to you from His Power; He is Wise and grants you wisdom from His Wisdom so that you may use it in your daily interactions. Allah is Over-Powering and He grants people authority to discipline those who are under their command so that their affairs may run correctly. He also grants people mercy so that they might be gentle with the weak and the needy.

Another of the attributes that the necessarily existent True Lord gives us is existence from His Existence. Indeed, He grants existence to innumerable individuals in their innumerable variations. Allah *Glorified is He* gives us an incidental existence from His fundamental existence. If one looks to the defects that afflict people in their limbs or senses, one will see that, be it in their outward appearances or their inner dispositions, they were put there by Allah *the Exalted*. Why? Because as man's creator has informed us, 'Nay, verily, man becomes grossly overweening whenever he believes himself to be Self-Sufficient' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7). An example of this would be a child with his father. If the father gives his son a monthly allowance, one will notice that the boy is only desirous to see his father once a month. If, however, he gives him it day by day the boy will come and loiter unduly around his father every day. He will present himself regularly so as to get the money for which he hopes. One may see him in the morning come to his father and say, 'Father, I am going to school'. It is need that has brought him to love his father.

It seems necessary to explain here the philosophy behind these needs which demand a solution. It is these needs which cause one to turn to one's Lord. Reality confirms this. We see that much of the time people do not turn to their Lord and do not rectify their relationship with their Creator except when

something goes wrong and circumstances become difficult. When someone finds no help but His Lord then he cries out, ‘O Lord!’, ‘O Allah’!

So, the Creator grants the vicegerent some of His attributes but these attributes remain temporal, impermanent gifts. That is why human beings die unborn or as children, as young, middle-aged or old men. This subject helps us to understand the Noble Hadith: ‘Allah created Adam in his image; his height was 60 cubits’⁽¹⁾. It is possible for the first pronoun ‘his’ to refer to Allah. The meaning would thus be that Allah *Glorified is He* created Adam *peace be upon him* in His image but not His reality. An image is that which captures a moment in a certain pose that one is then fixed in. Thus, the creation mentioned in this Hadith does not mean that Adam *peace be upon him* received any of Allah’s true attributes; rather, he received an image, as it were, of them. The reality is everlasting but the attributes of Adam *peace be upon him* were not.

It is also possible that the pronoun ‘his’ refers to Adam. The meaning would thus be, ‘Allah *Glorified is He* created Adam *peace be upon him* in Adam’s image’, for Allah *the Exalted* did not create Adam *peace be upon him* as a foetus that was subsequently born and grew into a child and then a young man; rather, his initial creation was in the form of a fully-grown man. Thus, we see that both interpretations are possible.

There is also a significant difference between one who creates and one who creates one who creates. To clarify this, imagine a small child who cannot move a table from its place. A strong man could easily move it, yet he cannot transfer his strength to a weak person so that the latter can do it on his own. He can only transfer the effect of his attribute, he took his burden from him and carried it but the child remained weak and unable to lift it.

One of the amazing aspects of Allah’s creation and His gifts is that He *Glorified is He* creates from His Power another power and gives it to us, so that

(1) *Al-Bukhari relates this Hadith in his Sahih [Kitab Al-Isti’dhan 5873] and Muslim in his Sahih [3741]. An-Nawawi said in his explanation of this Hadith, ‘The obvious interpretation of this narration is that the pronoun in the words ‘suratih’ (his image) refers to Adam peace be upon him and that the intended meaning is that Adam peace be upon him was first created in the image that he had while upon the earth and that he died upon. That image was that he was 60 cubits tall, and that he did not develop by stages as his descendants do. His image in paradise was the same as his image on earth, he did not change.’*

we ourselves are able to work with our own hands. Creation can volunteer and help the weak one and act on his behalf, but he remains weak. As for the Creator *Glorified is He* he gives the weak one strength to act on his own.

We should not forget though, that these attributes are granted to us, they are not part of our fundamental nature. Our existence is not inceptive, rather, we are vicegerents and by necessity we must remain in the care of the One Who appointed us such. Woe be to the one who tries to deviate from his Master, for He will strip him of the factors of his appointment.

One should know, when seeing those who have been afflicted or disabled in some way, by blindness or lameness, etc. that the Creator *Glorified is He* wants you to notice them so that you remember that your existence is not inceptive, only appointed. You are only something so long as the One who appointed you is with you. If He were to abandon you, you would cease to exist. One of the blemishes of man is that he considers himself to be inceptive. Were he to remember his place and the reality of his existence his affairs would be rectified.

Some people look at these afflictions as if they were deformities and see therein no wisdom. The reality is that they were created for some purpose that Allah *the Exalted* desires. They are a means of showing people that they should not be deluded just because they have healthy limbs, and that they should uphold the remembrance of Allah, the Creator. As we said, it is need that drives one.

We see that the traffic police will take a newly destroyed car and then put it in a prominent place so that everyone can see it, and thus be deterred from driving at foolish speeds. This car is an example and a means of clarification placed just so for a reason. It is quite comprehensible that they would destroy a car intentionally, given the trade-off between destroying one car and saving millions of lives.

When one sees a person with a defect one should say, 'All praise is for Allah Who made me healthy in regard to your affliction'⁽¹⁾, and look to Allah's blessings upon one, of which one is so often heedless.

(1) *It is related by At-Tirmidhi in his Sunnan [3421], and Ibn-Majah in his Sunnan [2892] on the authority of `Abdullah ibn `Umar Allah be pleased with them that the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Whoever sees someone with an affliction and says, "All=*

Someone may ask what the sin of such a person was that Allah should make him a reminder for others. We would say that if they knew what he was given to substitute it then they would desire to be like him. We should remember that Allah gives people with defects other characteristics to substitute for their loss. We have a proverb, 'The disabled man is a force to be reckoned with'. Perhaps you have seen a man with no arms thread a needle with his feet or a blind child memorise the entire Quran at the age of six. Allah took away his sight but gave him insight. These are things that normal people cannot accomplish.

We said previously that if a man crippled in one hand were to hit you with that hand you find it to be a lethal blow. This arm is always resting and does no work so it has more strength than a healthy one. If it comes into action all his strength would be in this arm.

Of our brothers whom Allah has tested by removing their sight we can only say that they are potential storehouses of knowledge! Why? They can achieve levels of knowledge of which the sighted are incapable. This is because the visual distractions around us distract those who can see. As for the blind, he has nothing to distract him, so his faculties of perception are always free and ready to receive. On top of that he is unable to read so he jumps at the opportunity to have someone read to him and listens avidly. He listens so keenly to what he hears that he doesn't need to hear it again. That is why one of them⁽¹⁾ said,

I was blinded a babe, and in blindness is acumen,
 Insightful became I, of knowledge a depot,
 The light left my eye, contributing to my hearts
 Knowledge, and what people wasted I got.⁽²⁾

= *praise is for Allah Who made me healthy in regard to your affliction, and preferred me over many of those he created a great deal" will be saved from that affliction as long as he lives, whatever happens.'*

- (1) He was Bashshar ibn-Burd Al-'Uqayli. Born in 95 A.H. he was originally from Turkistan and was blind. He grew up in Basra and went on to Baghdad and lived during both the Umayyad and 'Abbasid caliphates. He was accused of being a heretic and died while being lashed in 167 A.H. He was buried in Basra. *Al-Mawsu'a Ash-Shi'riyya*.
- (2) These two couplets are from *Bahr (meter) Al-Wafir* that has four couplets in total. They are as follows:

I was blinded a baby, and in blindness is acumen,

=

When we see people who are disabled or otherwise afflicted we tend to look at our completeness instead of the gifts they have been given as substitutes, but as we previously said, the person who composed the world-famous symphonies was deaf⁽¹⁾ and Tamerlane (Timur the Lame) as well, who conquered much of the world and won many famous battles, was lame.

When the true believer sees others whom Allah has tested, he does not arrogate himself above them or judge them by means of his own health; instead he humbles himself before them. He knows that this deficiency is compensated for by something else, so he asks himself, 'I wonder in what way he distinguishes himself and is better than me'? By means of this stance all people become equal.

So, man should always remember the reality that he is not inceptive in creation but Allah's vicegerent. How similar this is to deputation, i.e. when you choose another to represent you in something specific. If he then thinks that he is your representative in everything then he will misrepresent you. That is why sensible people, when choosing representatives, do so in accordance with necessity so that the representative does not infringe upon or abuse their rights.

The rectification of the world and of people's affairs is predicated upon this principle of vicegerency. The original state of man is that he is a vicegerent who is in need of the One Who appointed him. Feelings of independence usually lead us to forget this. But need drives and disposes us towards the One Who placed us here.

When Allah *Glorified is He* created Adam *peace be upon him* to be His vicegerent on earth, did He send him down into the world to carry out his duties in populating the earth and uncovering Allah's secrets in the universe without preparing him for this mission? How could this be possible when we

= Insightful became I, in knowledge perceptive,
From eye to heart the light passed, combined
With it, and what people wasted I did find.

(1) Beethoven, the German composer. He was the most pre-eminent musician in the development of classical music. He presented his first piece when he was eight years old. He began to lose his hearing in his thirties, but this did not affect his production which in fact increased in this period and was marked by an increase in creativity.

ourselves take, for instance, a sports player who we teach, prepare, and train just so that he can play a game? We spend money on him and correct his errors until he reaches the level required of him. What do you think would be the case then when it comes to the duty of populating the earth?

The True Lord *Glorified is He* prepared Adam *peace be upon him* for his duties. He placed him in a garden containing anything he might desire: ‘And We said: “O Adam, dwell you and your wife in this garden, and eat freely thereof, both of you, whatever you may wish; but do not approach this one tree, lest you become wrongdoers.”’ (*al-Baqara*: 35) This is how the Creator defined Adam’s way of living in paradise. He made it permissible for him to eat of whatever he willed, with the exception of one tree. Thus, we can see that what is permissible is plentiful, indeed uncountable, while what is forbidden is limited. This is Allah’s way in life. The legal basis for things is permissibility with the exception of those things for which a clear ruling exists prohibiting them and it is confined to those particular things.

Let us pause here to reflect upon the legal caution advised in Allah’s saying, ‘...but do not approach...’ (*al-Baqara*: 35). Allah did not say, ‘Do not eat....’ The thing that was prohibited here was approaching the tree because one’s closeness to the prohibited tempts you until you fall into it. This is why we find the Quran articulates commandments in the following manner: ‘... These are the bounds set by Allah; do not, then, transgress them...’ (*al-Baqara*: 229). As for prohibitions they articulated in a manner like the following: ‘...These are the bounds set by Allah: do not, then, approach them...’ (*al-Baqara*: 187). When wine was forbidden in Islam it was not just its drinking that was forbidden, rather, everything that is related to it was prohibited, be it buying, selling, transport or production, even being in the same place as it. Why? To block the means that leads to and tempts one into it.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* clarifies the lawful and the forbidden for us, His commands and His prohibitions, He turns our attention to an important issue. It is as though He says to us: ‘If you stand firm on this way your life will be safe and sound, free of troubles and hardships; but if you overstep the bounds then you will see the emergence of defects in society, be they behavioural, economical, societal, or whatever’.

In the story of Adam *peace be upon him* eating from the tree there is an indication of this matter. How? When Adam *peace be upon him* stood firm upon his Lord's way and kept His commandments he lived a healthy life with no defects, but when he strayed and listened to Satan's whispers, and ate from the tree he was forbidden from, his nakedness was revealed to him for the first time. This is because when he was obedient he was eating from the menu of his Lord, a menu that was tuned to the needs of his body such that nothing would remain of faeces to pass out of it. But when passion came into the matter and he obeyed Satan, he corrupted the diet that had been prepared for him; faeces formed in his digestive system and he felt something strange in his body for the first time. He was then shocked to find an opening in his body from which a foul, evil-smelling substance passed out. Hence Adam *peace be upon him* perceived that this was nakedness and should be covered. So, he took some leaves off a tree to cover his nakedness and conceal his private parts. Allah *the Exalted* says, '...But as soon as the two had tasted [the fruit] of the tree, they became conscious of their nakedness; and they began to cover themselves with pieced-together leaves from the garden. And their Lord called unto them: "Did I not forbid that tree unto you and tell you, that verily, Satan is your open foe?"' (*al-A'raf*: 22)

We have witnessed during the wars that a soldier can survive on a small loaf of bread and that this will provide him with a sufficient meal. It does not however produce a significant amount of faecal matter. This thus reduces the amount of time the soldier needs to spend eating and going to the toilet.

The story of Adam *peace be upon him* and his eating from the tree is representational of Allah's laws; as long as they are upheld, the state of the country and its inhabitants will be upright and defects and evil deeds will not manifest in society. If therefore we see a defect emerge in society, be it in regard to knowledge, economics, society, behaviour etc. we can be certain that some article of Allah's Law has been abandoned. This being the case, we must then search out the problem and, if it is within our capacity, try to remedy it on our own first. Allah *the Exalted* says, '...Verily, Allah does not change men's condition unless they change their inner selves...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 11).

Adam *peace be upon him* fell into disobedience after Allah had clarified for him what He had permitted and forbidden for him. He explained Satan's

enmity toward him and that this enmity had existed since Allah commanded him to prostrate and he refused. Despite all this however, Adam *peace be upon him* listened to Satan's whispers. He should have used the intellect he was gifted with and thought about what Satan (Iblis), his enemy, intended when he said, '...Your Lord has but forbidden you this tree lest you two become [as] angels, or lest you live forever' (*al-A'raf*: 20). So if whoever eats from this tree will live forever and never die, why then do you not eat from it Satan? Did you not say to Allah *the Exalted* '...Grant me a respite till the Day when all shall be raised from the dead' (*al-A'raf*: 14)? In this we find a hint at the obligation to reflect upon the devil's whispers and to refuse to submit to them.

So, Adam's time in paradise was a period of preparation to be a vicegerent. When his disobedience occurred, Allah wanted to move him out of paradise and send him down to an earthly life to perform the duties of his vicegerency in light of his previous experience.

It is as though Allah said to him, 'Take what you will of the permissible, and distance yourself from the prohibited. Be wary of Satan for he is still your enemy and will continue to whisper to you in an effort to lead you into disobedience as he did the first time. Do not therefore listen to him, for he is your enemy and he will lead you from a blessed life to an unhappy one, just as he took you from the paradise of maintaining My commandments and prohibitions.' 'And thereupon We said: "O Adam! Verily, this is a foe unto you and your wife: so let him not drive the two of you out of this garden and render you unhappy.'" (*Ta Ha*: 117) Notice that Allah did not say, 'and render you (both) unhappy'.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* put a sign in these verses from the very beginning of creation so that it might solve a problem that the world still discusses until now and will continue to do so. This is the issue of women going out to work and being equal with men, of women wanting to assert themselves, etc.

It is a strange thing that women should seek extra responsibilities and take on the duties of men, at a time when men are not taking any of their duties or burdens. Men do not get pregnant, give birth, or nurse children. So, women take on the duties of men and add them to their own specific duties that men are unable to undertake; this is a form of oppression of women.

Allah's saying to Adam *peace be upon him* '...and render you unhappy' (*Ta Ha*: 117) reveals that since the beginning of creation unhappiness, toil, trouble, work and the burden of responsibility have been the lot of man, while the woman is the mistress of her house, respected and honoured. This situation has been passed down through generations of our society without deception or obscurity. Even now when a young man wants to propose to a girl, her guardian will stipulate upon him, 'Will you make her a lady and not a labourer?', i.e. will you make her safe, the mistress of her household, or do you intend to make her go out and work?

Some people say, 'How could Adam *peace be upon him* be disobedient given that he was a Prophet? That would make him like Satan! For both then disobeyed Allah'! To this we say that Adam *peace be upon him* was disobedient during this period of preparation, a period during which mistakes are not punished, but rather corrected. In school the teacher corrects the pupil's mistake with red ink without taking him to account for it. This continues until the end of year examinations, and it is then that he is called to account for any errors he makes. So, when Adam *peace be upon him* made his mistake, he was in a period of preparation, and Allah corrected his error.

Secondly, Adam *peace be upon him* was not a prophet at this time. Adam *peace be upon him* was created to be the father of the human race, and they were to be divided into two sorts: Those who were chosen, i.e. the messengers, and those who were not chosen, i.e. the peoples of the messengers. Thus, in the beginning Adam *peace be upon him* represented both sorts. His experience came to exemplify both the disobedience of mankind and the sinless nature of the prophets. He made a mistake and Allah corrected him. Then he repented and Allah relented towards him and elected him. This reflects the general state of mankind. Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...And [thus] did Adam disobey his Lord, and thus did he fall into grievous error' (*Ta Ha*: 121). This is an indication of what will happen among mankind. 'Thereafter, [however,] his Lord elected him [for His Grace], and accepted his repentance, and bestowed His guidance upon him' (*Ta Ha*: 122). Hence, the election and divine protection from sin came after the initial incident because Adam *peace be upon him* was to characterise all mankind. He exemplified the disobedience of man and he exemplified the sinless nature of the prophets.

This vicegerent came into a world that was created for him before he existed. It was not that Allah *Glorified is He* created it and then looked to see whether it lacked anything, and thus created Adam *peace be upon him* in a way that suited the task that he was to perform of populating the earth. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘He brought you into being out of the earth, and made you thrive thereon...’ (*Hud*: 61).

Further, the True Lord *Glorified is He* did not make the basic acts of worship, i.e. the pillars of Islam, the entirety of life; rather, he made them like recharging stations that help in one’s daily business. To whoever would say that Islam is these pillars; we perform them and that is it, we would say, no! It is by means of these pillars that one is to take strength from Allah so that one may be productive in one’s daily business. Islam is far broader than these five pillars. The proof of this is in Allah’s saying in the chapter of *al-Jumu’a*, ‘O you who have attained to faith! When the call to prayer is sounded on the day of congregation, hastens to the remembrance of Allah, and leaves all sales: this is for your own good, if you but knew it.’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 9) So, He has called them and taken them from their work, the acme of their daily business. This is their selling. Selling is obviously connected to buying except that the former is stronger, that it why it is mentioned alone. Why did Allah tell us to leave buying and selling? The scholars say it is because Allah *Glorified is He* is the Creator of human nature and He knows that people when initiating a purchase are not so keen. They are keen however when it comes to selling and they put great effort into it. That is why when someone in the family asks you to buy something for them you may sometimes procrastinate and delay it, and when you go and find the shop shut you are quietly happy. If, however you were trying to sell something, then you are ever so eager to sell it off. Why? Because the buyer is paying and the seller is receiving. That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentioned selling because it is the fruit of one’s business.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says, ‘And when the prayer is ended, disperse freely on earth and seek to obtain [something] of Allah’s bounty’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 10). So, He took you from your work to pray and, when the prayer was done, He returned you to your work and endeavour.

When we reflect upon the phrasing of the Hadith, 'Islam is built upon five pillars'⁽¹⁾, we see that these five are the supporting edifice upon which Islam stands; the building is not the same as the thing it is built upon. Are the buildings that we live in made of foundations and pillars alone? Thus, Islam is not the five pillars, Islam is more than that. These pillars are the charging station that your Lord summons you to. From your interaction with Allah you take the spiritual sustenance to help you to perform your daily business. An example of this is a battery when you take it to the recharger. We do not benefit from it while it is in the recharger, but we charge it so that we can use it after that.

It is from the wonders of Allah's Mercy that He made visiting these 'human rechargers' a legal responsibility that must be performed. It is as though Allah *the Exalted* is saying to us, 'You must come to Me five times throughout the day and the night because you are My creation and the Creator knows best what is good for his creation'. Imagine a creation that turns away from its creator five times every day and night, could it be in any more perdition? This is if the creator is a human, so what then would be the case if he were the Creator and Lord of mankind *Glorified is He*.

The human artisan fixes his creations with something material like a nail or a piece of bandage. The Creator *Glorified is He* however fixes His creation without recourse to materials. This is because the engineer and his works are material things and hence need to be fixed with materials. The Creator *Glorified is He* on the other hand is unseen and so when He fixes some defect in you He does so in an unseen way so that you neither see it nor feel it.

So, we must understand the religion as it really is and realise that we all have a role to play. If Allah puts someone above you, you should realise that He did so for your benefit. His being over you means that he must render you some service, while at the same time he will not benefit from you.

The one who does a job well will undoubtedly benefit himself and benefit others, as opposed to the one who does nothing well. In this vein, there is a

(1) *Al-Bukhari relates in his Sahih [8] and Muslim in his Sahih [16] on the authority of Ibn 'Umar Allah be pleased with them who said, 'The Prophet peace and blessings be upon him said, "Islam is built upon five things: Testifying that there is nothing worthy of worship other than Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, the establishment of the prayer, the giving of zakat (obligatory charity), Hajj and fasting during Ramadan."*

saying amongst farmers that says, ‘the carpenter’s door is off its hinges’. The carpenter shows his skill when he is working for others because he gets paid for it, but when it comes to himself he lowers his standards. Thus, when you see one who is above you, you should not envy or hate him, rather hope for an increase for him and wish him well. Some of that good will assuredly returns upon you, and his elevation will come back to you in the form of services he renders you.

When I was with the farmers, if one of our cows or buffalos died everyone would be saddened to the extent that once we saw a group crying over a calf that had died. We were very surprised at this, for people may cry if one of their own dies, but over an animal?! We later learned that this calf was the one that turned the water wheel and irrigated the ground that everybody ate from, and brought out the good therein. This was in the countryside; we would not buy cucumbers, Jew’s mallow (an herb), okra and many other things, rather things were given as gifts, and not sold.

A gift given to creation returns its benefits upon all creation. When you see someone who has more wealth than you, wish an increase for him because the good of his wealth will inevitably come back upon you. When you see someone who performs work better than you can, do not hate him because you will need him to improve your work, even if such is hateful to you. Or, despite your differences with him you may try to get him to work for you because you know the quality of his work. Thus, you go to him out of your own self-interest. In this way, the desired balance in society is achieved and the affairs of creation are established on the basis of need.

If one reflects upon oneself as Allah *the Exalted* says, ‘just as [there are signs thereof] within your own selves: can you not, then, see?’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 21) One will see that this balance exists between one’s limbs. The right hand for instance takes care of certain duties that are appropriate to it, while the left hand takes care of other duties that are more appropriate to it. The right hand is for honourable and respectable deeds, while the left hand is for those that are not. Usually the right hand is stronger than the left, more agile and more precise.

Look for instance at when you want to cut your fingernails. You cut the fingernails of your left hand with your right and they come out nice and trim,

as opposed to the fingernails of the right hand cut by the left. Thus, we can see, the talents of the right hand came back to benefit the left, while the weakness of the left hand affected the right. This helps us see that completion and perfection is achieved in creation through the assistance of others.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* created man as His vicegerent, he gave him a form that suits his purpose. The first aspect of this form is the senses with which he perceives things. They are named the five manifest senses. They are said to be 'manifest' out of caution, for one will find that there are other senses that science will identify.

It has in fact been discovered that men have senses other than these five, such as the sense by which one knows one is hungry, the sense of perspective by which one perceives the distance between two objects, and the muscular sense by means of which one knows the weight of something.

When we reflect upon the five well-known senses we find that legal responsibility comes according to the nature of these senses. Each sense in man and each limb have its own work, meaning the performance of its role. The heart works by making intentions, the tongue by speaking, the ears by listening, the nose by smelling, the hand by touching and the eye by seeing. These things are their work.

We need to differentiate between the work and the doing. When we say 'doing' we mean as opposed of speaking, which is the work of the tongue. Allah, says, 'O you who have attained to faith! Why do you say one thing and do another?' (*as-Saff*: 2) So speech, the work of the tongue, has a division all its own, while the rest of the senses share a division. Speech is with tongue while 'doing' is with the other senses. Why does the tongue alone take half while the other half is divided between all the other senses? The scholars say it is because speech is how the messengers convey what is sought from us so that we may do it. It is also how we convey our desires to others so that they may fulfil them. Thus, all actions or 'doings' are in the service of speech. Allah's way did not come to us except by means of speech, for it is this that carries the commandment to the senses so that they may enact it.

Work is not necessarily the work of muscles; it may well be spiritual in nature, such as the work of the heart which is forming intentions as we

said. It is the Sacred Law which presides over these senses and defines the framework within which they may work considering what is permissible and impermissible.

The role of the senses is to perceive the world around and then present that information to the intellect which then compares and filters the information. It knows that this is good for such-and-such, while that is good for something else. After this filtering, it passes the information to the heart so that it might form a belief about it. The word *'aqida* means something that has been tied up so that it does not come undone; it is not open to argument by the intellect after having been settled upon. Imagine a small child who is taken in by the beautiful appearance of fire. He tries to touch it and he gets burnt. He feels real heat for the first time and he forms a conclusion or a belief that fire burns, so he does not go near it again. He lives the rest of his life upon this principle or belief. He does not need to try it again to be sure. At the very time this belief takes root in the heart it starts to pump it with the blood until it travels through the whole body and permeates every limb and saturates it. This explains the Noble Hadith, '...if it is sound, the whole body is sound, but if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Indeed, it is the heart.'⁽¹⁾

After creating the limbs and the senses for man the True Lord *Glorified is He* created the desires. These are an essential part of you. They are a permanent and indispensable part of your being. Despite this, a desire may harass you until it takes you beyond its purpose. This is when the Sacred Law must intervene to limit its recalcitrance and return it to the balance for which Allah created it.

The Sacred Law intervenes in order to refine and elevate the desire, not to repress it and eradicate it. The desire to eat for instance maintains one's life. In this case, what is sufficient was described by the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* when he said, 'A few morsels are enough to keep the son of Adam's back straight.'⁽²⁾

(1) *Al-Bukhari relates it in his Sahih [52] and Muslim in his Sahih [1599] on the authority of An-Nu'man ibn Bashir Allah be pleased with him.*

(2) *This was related by Ahmad in his Musnad [4/133] and At-Tirmidhi in his Sunnan [2380] on the authority of Al-Miqdam ibn-Ma'di Yakrib. The wording of the Hadith is, 'The human being fills no container worse than his stomach. A few morsels are enough to keep the=*

One should not go beyond this for it will lead to Luttony and indigestion. The love of discovery is a desire that Allah created so we might reflect upon creation and search for the secrets He has placed throughout it. If one leaves this framework and starts to seek out others' faults and to spy then the desire has gone beyond its role. This is where the Sacred Law comes in to elevate it and return it to its proper balance.

The most vicious of man's desires is the sexual one, especially in youth. This is a desire that Allah placed in man to sustain progeny and preserve the species. This is why the desire for sex was created. The Sacred Law seeks to preserve this desire in combination with its Creator's methodology so that things stay decent. This is because offspring is the prime treasure to be preserved if lineage is to remain pure and honourable.

We have previously differentiated between legitimate offspring that are attributed to the parents and illegitimate offspring. We explained how the former is received with kindness, joy, love, and care whereas the latter is met unenthusiastically and with distaste. The mother may well think of getting rid of the child, even abandoning it in the street.

For this reason, the religion encourages families to be built in a sound fashion, with pride and dignity; to be built in the shade of Allah's word and methodology, as this will ensure the soundness of one's progeny. Thus, one's offspring comes forth and one has no doubts over its origin. One cares for it and raises it in the best possible way. This is the goal of the Sacred Law.

We also talked previously about the difference between the lawful and the prohibited in this realm, and we mentioned the Noble Hadith, 'The permissible has cut off the nose of jealousy.'

So, this desire was created in the human soul for a purpose and it is to remain within the framework for which it was created. What happens however is that many people take it beyond its purpose. It is surprising that people oppress animals in this regard when they say openly, 'this is animal passion'. Such a saying indicates a lack of understanding of the nature of animals, for animals

= son of Adam's back straight. If he really must do so, then a third for his food, a third for his drink and a third for air.' At-Tirmidhi said it is a good sound Hadith.

do not take their desires beyond the limits that Allah has created. This is why we do not see a female animal get pregnant and then let another male have her again. Similarly, the male smells her and when he realises she is pregnant he turns away from her. Is this the animal passion that we mean by this phrase? No. It is a human affair. You can compare between animal nature and human nature and you will see it is quite amazing the way man deviates in this matter from his intended path.

It is from the wisdom of the Creator *Glorified is He* that He bound the desire for sex and procreation with pleasure. Offspring brings responsibility, consequences, and other demands and, were there not pleasure to encourage men, they would feel no need for it and would turn away.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* presents the believer with a single methodology which comprises paired opposites such as pride and humility. The believer is not always proud by nature, nor always humble. Rather, it is circumstances that dictate to him whether to be proud or humble. Humility and lowliness are for his Muslim brothers, while pride and arrogance are to be shown to those who are obstinate among the disbelievers. As Allah *the Exalted* said in his description of the Prophet *peace be upon him* and the believers, ‘Muhammad is Allah’s Apostle; and those who are [truly] with him are firm and unyielding towards all deniers of the truth, [yet] full of mercy towards one another...’ (*al-Fath*: 29). Thus, they are firm and unyielding and yet full of mercy at the same time, and in this is a proof that the believer is not content with his own desires unless they fulfil the criterion of the Creator of desires.

Among the other characteristics of the human constitution in addition to the senses and the desires is that Allah created in him emotions. Emotions are feelings the causes of which are unknown. That is why you meet one person and you feel at ease with him, while another you dislike, just like that, even though you do not know him. Why do you like one and not the other? That is because of emotions. This is why someone loves his son even if he is an idiot; he loves him because of his emotions. If your enemy has an intelligent son, you may love him by means of your intellect. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* did not make the emotions an area of legal responsibility. Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him* clarified this when he said to his

companions, and among them was 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* 'None of you truly believes until I am more beloved to him than his mother, his father and his own self.'⁽¹⁾ 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* was struck by this and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, you are more beloved to me than my mother and father, my son and my wealth, but my own self O Messenger of Allah?' So the Prophet *peace be upon him* repeated it another time until 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* realised that it was a matter of resolution, and that the Prophet *peace be upon him* must mean another sort of love, other than the one 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* meant, i.e. intellectual love. At this, 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Now, O Messenger of Allah', meaning, now you have become more beloved to me than my mother and father, more beloved to me than my son and my wealth, and more beloved to me than my very own self.'

So, what is intended by love of the Prophet *peace be upon him* is intellectual love, because had it not been for him *peace be upon him* we would not have sought guidance or reached it, and had it not been for him we would have been destroyed. So, you love Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as you love bitter medicine. You do not love it through your emotions but through your intellect. That is why 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* understood that the love that was legally binding was intellectual. If after that it turns into emotion and personal love then this is another level, higher than the first.

The Quran teaches us this in Allah's saying, '...and never let hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just: this is closest to being Allah-conscious...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 8), i.e. you must not let hatred for a people lead you to be unjust towards them or oppress them. Hence hatred is not something forbidden because it is an emotional matter. So, love that you will and hate whom you will, but woe to you if you let your love or hatred

(1) *On the authority of the grandfather of Zahra ibn-Mu'bid, who said, 'We were with the Prophet peace be upon him when he took the hand of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him who said, 'O Messenger of Allah, I swear by Allah that you are more beloved to me than everything except my own self.' The Prophet peace be upon him said, 'By Him in whose hand is my soul, none of you truly believes until I am more beloved to him than his own self.' 'Umar replied, 'By Allah, you are now more beloved to me than my own self.' To which the Prophet peace be upon him replied, 'Now 'Umar!' It was narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad [4/236].*

carry you to be unfair such that you overstep the bounds with the ones you love or oppress the ones you hate.

Emotions in this form are essentially uncontrollable, and are therefore outside the sphere of legal responsibility because you do not know why your emotions lead you to love or hate something.

When we examine the senses, the desires and the emotions we find that the senses are obvious and well known; the eyes see, the ears hear, etc. Similarly, the desires are manifested in their causes and effects; when you get hungry you look for food, and when you want your family you draw close to them. Emotions however are out of sight and hidden. That is why the Quran illustrates them with a parable not of men, nor yet of animals or plants but rather of inanimate objects. Read Allah's saying regarding the outcome of the disbelievers of Pharaoh's people, 'and neither sky nor the earth shed tears over them...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 29). It is obvious that shedding tears is a manifestation of emotion. Can the sky cry? Can the earth cry? Yes, they are sensitive and can cry. It is as though they say to these disbelievers, 'Go! For no-one is sorry on your behalf'. Had this not been so, Allah would not have negated crying on their behalf. Why do we consider such to be unlikely when the earth and the sky are two of Allah's creations, ready to do His bidding? Did the True Lord *Glorified is He* not say, '...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)?

Thus, there is nothing too amazing in the fact that inanimate objects should rejoice when they find someone who joins them in their glorification and thus unites with the rest of creation in doing so. Neither is it too amazing that they should be sad, and that they should cry when people go astray from the correct order of things. In this way, we see that to say that the heavens and the earth did not cry over the destruction of Pharaoh's people is entirely possible, as it would be to say that they were filled with joy at the guidance of Pharaoh's wife, Asiya. So, we repeat, the heavens and the earth have emotions and sensitivities, they love and hate, and they cry and rejoice.

'Ali Allah be pleased with him made this matter clear for us when he said, 'When the believer dies, two places cry for him, a place in the sky and a place

on earth. As for the place in the sky, it is the place to which his good works would be raised, and it cries because now it is deprived of receiving good speech and works. As for the place on earth, it is his place of prayer.⁽¹⁾

This was a necessary introduction to the story of Prophet Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* upon which we now embark with Allah's saying:

وَإِنَّ لُوطًا لِّمَنِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ إِذْ بَجَّيْنَاهُ وَآهْلَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿١٣٥﴾
ثُمَّ دَمَرْنَا الْأَخْرِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ وَإِنَّا لَنُمرُّونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَبِالْأَيْلِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٣٨﴾

Lot was also one of the messengers [133] We saved him and all his family [134] except for an old woman who stayed behind [135] and We destroyed the rest [136] You [people] pass by their ruins morning [137] and night: will you not take heed? [138] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 133 - 138)

The task of Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* when calling his people was indeed most taxing. For this reason, he is mentioned seventeen times in the Quran in the nominative and genitive cases and a further ten times in the accusative case. His task was taxing because he *peace and blessings be upon him* came to rectify the most violent of desires in the human being, the desire for sex.

Would that this desire had taken its natural course with these people, namely men desiring women, but this were a deviant sexual desire, with men desiring men, for which there was no precedent. No one had ever committed this newly invented and heinous crime before them. As Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says on the tongue of Prophet Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* '...Will you commit abominations such as none in all the world has ever done before you?' (*al-A'raf*: 80)

We have said previously that every man has freedom regarding his own particular self. This freedom however has limits when we involve others. So, I have freedom regarding myself, I have freedom regarding my family and I have freedom with the people in the street generally, but each has his limits

(1) Ibn Kathir relates in his *Tafsir* [4/142] that a man asked 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* 'Do the heavens and earth cry over anybody?' He replied to him, 'You have asked me something that no-one has ever asked me before. There is no slave of Allah except that he has a place of prayer on earth and a place where his good works go up in the heavens.'

and his duties. When a man shuts the door of his room upon himself, his freedom is broader because there is no one with him to limit his freedom. If he leaves his room and goes to the sitting room, though, his freedom becomes somewhat narrower due to the presence of his wife and children. If he goes out into the street with the general people, then his freedom is even more restricted because everyone that he interacts with in the street has freedom too, and the freedom of others restricts his freedom. Hence if you go, for example, to an informal assembly where your friends and brothers are, you do not go all dressed up and exercise the best manners. This is how the people of Lut (Lot) began to boast of their obscenities, and it got worse until it reached the point that they would actually do them in their assemblies. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says, ‘... you commit these shameful deeds in your [open] assemblies ...’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 29), i.e. things that one should not do even in secret, they did openly in their assemblies. This is forbidden by the Sacred Law, even if it is with your wife who is permissible for you, for one is not to approach his wife except in the home.

Thus, when some people claimed that a man is free to seek pleasure with his wife wherever he wills, taking this understanding from Allah’s saying, ‘Your wives are your tilth; go, then, unto your tilth as you may desire ...’ (*al-Baqara*: 223). We would say to them, ‘You have been heedless of the meaning of the word "tilth" *harth* in this verse. *Al-Harth* refers to land that is ready to be sown with seed. Similarly, one’s wife is to be approached in the place where the child is to be born. If it is another place where a child is not brought from, then this is unlawful. So, if Islam prohibits such a deed with one’s wife, what is one to imagine about doing it with another man?!”

Similarly, just as Islam has prohibited the deeds of the people of Lut (Lot), a man approaching a man, it has prohibited a woman to be with a woman, and this is known as lesbianism, and we seek refuge with Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* from this. This prohibition is based upon an analogy with men.

Thus, the Sacred Law corrects the deviant desires that can manifest in relationships between two men, two women or a marital relationship between a man and his wife, and He puts down deterrent laws for this matter. Why is this? This is due because this deviancy harms the youth and the civilisation of

the world; Allah *the Exalted* wants his vicegerent on earth to be clean and noble so that they might be qualified for this vicegerency.

Prophet Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* was mentioned 27 times in the Quran because of the weight of the duty he was given, while Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* despite his importance in the procession of messengers and despite his wondrous creation, is mentioned only 25 times.

I personally have taken many scholars and writers to task over the fact that in Arabic language they call this disgusting deed *Al-luwat* and its perpetrator a *luti*, linguistically ascribing this crime and its perpetrator to the Prophet of Allah Lut (Lot). It is a grave error and a repulsive thing to ascribe this ugly and obscene deed to a Prophet of Allah who came to eradicate it and rectify the behaviour of these people. They say in defence that they are only following the rules of Arabic speech for ascription, as a poet⁽¹⁾ said,

Mention one, ascribing him to a group,

Even if he does not resemble one of them, through coinage⁽²⁾

That is to say, they are the people of Lut (Lot) by ascription, yet there is in language a phenomenon known as 'coinage' (*An-naht*). We can coin from Lut's (Lot's) name another word that will refer to these people as the perpetrators of this action, yet distinctly removed from Prophet Lut (Lot) himself. Nevertheless, it is a repulsive thing to make such a word a title for this obscenity.

These verses that we are now dealing with recall the story of Prophet Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* and his people. They cover a fragment from the latter parts and end of his story, where Allah *Glorified is He* saves the believers and destroys the disbelievers, along with its beginning where Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* meets his uncle Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says, 'Thereupon [his brother's son] Lut (Lot) came to believe in him and said, "Verily, I [too] shall forsake the

(1) He was Abu 'Abdullah Jamal Ad-Din ibn Malik, the author of *Al-Alfiyya fī An-Nahw*, one of the leading scholars in the field of Arabic language. He was born in Jayan in Andalusia in the year 600 AH. He moved to Damascus and died there in the year 672 AH at the age of 72. He authored many books relating to Arabic language.

(2) This is line 878 in *Al-Alfiyya*. It is from *Bahr (meter) Ar-Rajz* and it comprises 1002 lines.

domain of evil [and turn] to my Sustainer, for verily, He alone is Almighty, Truly Wise!"' (*al-'Ankabut*: 26)

This is a portion of the story and not merely repetition as some people claim. The stories in the Quran are not told in one fell swoop, rather, they come in various snapshots, each one mentioned at the time appropriate to it.

Again and again a number of superficial people take issue with the story of Musa's (Moses') staff and charge the Quran with repetition, but this is only the result of their limited understanding of Allah's Book. The first time he threw it was to familiarise himself with it as Allah *the Almighty* wanted to try it out just between himself and his Lord. The proof of this is Allah's question to him, 'Now, what is this in your right hand, O, Musa (Moses)?' (*Ta Ha*: 17) Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* knew full well what was in his right hand, yet He wanted to acquaint him with it. This is why Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* gave such a long reply. 'He answered, "It is my staff. I lean on it, and with it I beat down leaves for my sheep. Also, [many] other uses have I for it."' (*Ta Ha*: 18) Then Allah *Glorified is He* told him to cast it down, 'He said, "Throw it down, O, Musa (Moses)!' So, he threw it—and lo, it was a snake, moving rapidly. He said, "Take hold of it and fear not. We shall restore it to its former state."' (*Ta Ha*: 19-21)

So, Allah *the Exalted* desired to train Musa (Moses) so that when the time came to throw the staff down in front of Pharaoh, he would see it turn into a real snake and would thus be ready for it and not be frightened. The other time he was commanded to throw the staff down was in front of Pharaoh and his sorcerers. So, the former was one time, and the latter was another time.

Had Allah *the Almighty* willed, He could have told the whole story as He did with Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* perhaps to perfect the weaving of the narrative, as literary critics say, and perhaps because the admonition and message of the story would be deficient if it were not told in its entirety. Stories in the Quran are not a historical account as such, nor are they for our entertainment; rather, they deliver messages and admonitions. For Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they were a consolation. The task of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when faced with the obstinacy, enmity, stubbornness and disbelief of his people, necessitated that

Allah *the Exalted* strengthened him constantly. Every time he needed strengthening, verses would be revealed to him, bringing an appropriate gleanings from the procession of messages. Then Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* would console His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* by reminding him that because he was the master and Seal of the Messengers sent to all peoples until the end of time, it was inevitable that he would face increased troubles from his people.

We have previously given an example of this when we said that in July 1952 we witnessed a revolution. We still celebrate it every year and listen to the story of what happened, yet each year we realise something new regarding these events and learn new lessons.

Thus the stories in the Quran came in snapshots at the appropriate times to strengthen Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; Allah says, ‘... [It has been revealed] in this manner so that We might strengthen thy heart thereby, for We have so arranged its component parts that they form one consistent whole.’ (*al-Furqan*: 32)

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says regarding Lut (Lot): ‘And, behold, Lut (Lot) was indeed one of Our message-bearers; [and so,] when [We decreed the doom of his sinful town] We saved him and his household *ahlahu*, except an old woman who was amongst those who stayed behind, and then We utterly destroyed the others.’ (*as-Saffat*: 133-136); He did so by pelting them with stones.

Regarding the word *ahlahu* (his household), *Al-ahl* can be used to refer to a man’s close relatives, or it can be used to refer to his wife. Allah *the Almighty* informs us in this verse that He saved Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* and his entire family, but he makes an exception of his wife: ‘except an old woman who was amongst those who stayed behind’ (*as-Saffat*: 135). In another verse, He says: ‘... all but your wife. She will indeed be amongst those that stay behind.’ (*al-Ankabut*: 33) The word *ghabirin* (those who stay behind) is the plural of *ghabir*, and this word can be used to refer to two opposite meanings. It can mean something that has passed or finished, and it can mean something which remains. In reference to Lut’s (Lot’s) wife it carries both meanings; she was of the *ghabirin* in the sense that she was amongst those who were left behind to be destroyed, and she was of the *ghabirin*

in the sense that she was amongst those who remained waiting for the punishment to come.

Then, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* reminds us that the stories in the Quran are not narrated for our entertainment but so that we might take a lesson and an admonition from them. Allah says: ‘And, verily, [to this day] you pass by the remnants of their dwellings ...’ (*as-Saffat*: 137); this is in reference to Sodom: ‘...at morning-time and by night. Will you not, then, use your reason?’ (*as-Saffat*: 137-138) Indeed, Arabs used to pass by them on their journeys and trading expeditions during the summer and winter and see the remains of their houses.

This was a brief gleaning, like an urgent telegraph of the story of Prophet Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* and his people. Similar to this is the story of Yunus (Jonah) *peace be upon him*.

وَإِنَّ يُونُسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلِّ الْمَشْحُونِ ﴿١٤٠﴾
فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾ فَالْتَقَمَهُ الْحُوتُ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ ﴿١٤٢﴾
فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ ﴿١٤٣﴾ لَلَبِثَ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

Jonah too was one of the messengers [139] He fled to the overloaded ship [140] They cast lots, he suffered defeat [141] and a great fish swallowed him, for he had committed blameworthy acts [142] If he had not been one of those who glorified God [143] he would have stayed in its belly until the Day when all are raised up [144] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 139 - 144)

The first thing to notice in this verse is that Allah *the Exalted* affirms in these verses that Prophet Yunus (Jonah) *peace be upon him* was a messenger: ‘And, behold, Yunus (Jonah) was indeed one of Our message-bearers’ (*as-Saffat*: 139). Let us take and consider this fact before delving into his story in order to understand it in light of it and so that, even if nothing happened that was unbecoming of a messenger in your eyes, you would know that these events do not detract from his status as a messenger. The One Who sent him bore witness to his being a messenger and did not strip him of his rank after what happened, so when you hear his story, do not say to yourself

that what he did was unbecoming of a messenger because you are not more jealous on behalf of Allah's religion than Allah Himself.

Look at Allah's saying: 'when he fled like a runaway slave onto a laden ship' (*as-Saffat*: 140). The word *abaaq* means he ran away, not in an absolute sense, but as a slave running away from his master. It was not as someone running away from a man who had hired him, or as a son running away from his father, for these are not considered to be fleeing *ubuq*. The word *abaaq* has connotations of complete slavery to the highest master. Hence, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* was his Master, and he was His slave because a slave is a property; he actually belongs to his master when he takes him captive. Yes, this is indeed the truth because the life of a slave is spared by means of this ownership. Instead of being killed in battle, he was taken prisoner and became a slave. He does not become a slave until he is taken captive and, so long as he has been taken captive and is under his captor's power, he could be killed. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* made him a possession in order to spare his life.

There is no need, therefore, to compare freedom and slavery. If you want a comparison, compare slavery with death. If you gave a slave a choice between living with and serving his master and being killed, he would choose slavery. Hence, slavery is not a fault in Islam; rather, it is a favour that Islam has rendered to these people.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not come to establish slavery or to increase the number of slaves; he came to place rules upon slavery and to reduce its sources. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came when slavery was widespread in society, to the extent that there were 23 different sources that slavery sprang from. So what did Islam do? It put a stop to all these sources and left behind only one, the captive of a war endorsed by the Sacred Law. Then, it started to count the cost of slavery and clear the way for the liberation of slaves as we see in expiations and supererogatory acts. If, however, one has committed no sin which necessitates expiation through the freeing of a slave, then he is not obligated to free a slave and may keep any that he has and treat them kindly.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* laid down the regulations for us when it comes to dealing with slaves when he said, 'They are your brothers.

Allah has put them in your power. So, whomever Allah has put of a brother in his power let him feed him from what he eats, dress him as he dresses, and not give him more work than he can cope with. If he should give him more than he can cope with, then let him help him with it.⁽¹⁾

This is the decree of Islam regarding slaves. Islam maintained in bondage those taken in a war sanctioned by the Sacred Law because they are our enemies, surrounding us and fighting us, and would happily take our children from us, so it is necessary to respond kindly. They take some of us captives, and we take some of them captives; they ransom their captives so we ransom our captives; they free them so we free them, etc. Therefore, if one reflects on this matter, he will find that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not come to institutionalise slavery; rather, he came to institutionalise the freeing of slaves.

Allah's saying regarding Prophet Yunus (Jonah) *peace be upon him* 'when he fled ...' (*as-Saffat*: 140), is not finding fault with him because the word *abaa* means that he recognised that he was a slave of his Lord. This is but a snapshot of the story, and the full details are not related in this verse; instead, they come in another chapter so that we might realise that this is not some mechanical exercise. These snapshots are chosen for their appropriateness, and each comes in its place for a reason. Prophet Yunus (Jonah) *peace be upon him* has a whole chapter named after him, yet his name is mentioned in it only once, whereas his whole history is related in other chapters that are not named after him.

The meaning of *abaa* is that he fled from his Master or that he left his people without his Lord's permission. This matter is detailed in Allah's saying, 'And [remember] him of the great fish...' (*al-Anbiya*': 87), which refers to Prophet Yunus (Jonah), '...when he went off in wrath *mughadib*...' (*al-Anbiya*': 87). The word used in this verse, *mughadib*, has a different meaning to the word *ghadib*. *Mughadib* implies reciprocation; he is angry and his antagonist is angry, too. It is like saying, 'Muhammad participated with 'Ali'; it is the same as saying, "'Ali participated with Muhammad.' As for the word *ghadib*, it means he was angry on his own.

(1) This is related by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* [6050] on the authority of Abu Dharr and also by Muslim in his *Sahih* [1661] in the chapter *Kitab Al-Iman—Bab It'am Al-Mamluk Mimma Ya'kul*.

However, with whom was he angry? The other party in this verse is the people who belied and harmed him in ways he could not bear. He was not angry with his Lord; rather, he was angry with his people and at the same time hoped that his Lord would pardon him in this matter. This is why Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says after this: '... did he think that We had no power over him (*lan naqdir* 'alayhi) ...' (*al-Anbiya*: 87). Some people⁽¹⁾ understood Allah's saying '*lan naqdir*' (we had no power) to be related to Allah's Power, but God forbid that a Prophet of Allah could think that Allah *the Exalted* did not have power over him or that he would not return him to his people. Rather, the meaning of *lan naqdir* in this verse is 'we would not constrain his affair'⁽²⁾ as in Allah's saying: '... and let him whose means of subsistence are scanty (*qudir* 'alayhi *rizquhu*) spend in accordance with what Allah has given him ...' (*at-Talaq*: 7). This was thus a belief in the mercy of the One Who sent him and that He *the Most High* would not restrain him from expressing his emotions when he left his people without permission from his Lord.

The ship was fully laden, and this indicates to us that this boat had a specific capacity which was not to be exceeded, for otherwise, it would be in danger of sinking according to Archimedes' rule that explains how things float. It is upon this principle that submarines are designed. The word submarine means something that goes under the water because its weight is greater than that of the water it displaces. This is why they say, 'Lighten it and it will float.'

Since the boat was fully loaded and the number of passengers was more than the boat could carry, the captain decided to throw one of the passengers overboard to lighten the load. They drew lots and it fell to Prophet Yunus (Jonah) *peace be upon him* so they threw him into the sea, and a fish subsequently came and swallowed him. This is the meaning of, 'And then they cast lots...' (*as-Saffat*: 141), which means that he entered into the ballot with them: '... and he was the one who lost (*min al-mudhadin*)' (*as-Saffat*: 141). The *mudhad* is

(1) This was related by 'Awf from Al-Hasan Al-Basri. The implied meaning is 'thinking we had no power over him?' Ibn Al-Jawzi said in *Zad Al-Masir* when explaining this verse, 'So, looking at it this way, it is a question in which the letter (alif) has been elided, and it does refer to power. It could be conceived of as referring to power except as a question, and I know of no other explanation except it being an incredulous question (*istifham inkar*).'

(2) This was the opinion of 'Ata' according to what Ibn Al-Jawzi mentioned in *Zad Al-Masir*.

the one who loses in a deal, the deal in this case being the ballot, where he came to be the one to be cast into the sea.

The casting of lots is a way of making choices that frees a captain of a ship from being accused of prejudice or favouritism. The drawing of lots is a matter of pure destiny; there is no way for desires to interfere, and it proves the impartiality of a particular judgment. This is why we often have recourse to this method with small children. We let a child choose, for example, from several pieces of paper. Why is this? Because he cannot differentiate between them, thus his choice is made by destiny, free of volition.

Allah's saying, 'And then they cast lots...' (*as-Saffat*: 141) gives us a principle for society that helps us to avoid grudges and frees us of constrained situations. If there is something that will not suffice all the people seeking it, it is not right for the person in charge of it to discriminate between them; due to the fact that when someone else makes the decision, it can give rise to turbulence in people's hearts. When casting lots, however, the choice falls to destiny and no one has any say in it.⁽¹⁾

This is a method that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had recourse to when he entered Medina, and the people crowded round him, each one wanting to take the reins of his camel so that he could take him to his house. What was Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to do when he did not wish to hurt anyone's feelings? He decided the matter by saying of the camel, 'Leave it, for it is under orders.' Thus, he freed himself from the decision and left the matter to Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* and His decree. The camel then kept walking until it knelt down in front of the house of Banu Najjar.⁽²⁾

(1) *Al-Qurtubi mentions an important point in regard to this verse in his exegesis [8/5765] and that is that it is not permissible to use this verse as a proof of the permissibility of drawing lots to throw a human being into the sea. He said, 'This was specific to Yunus (Jonah) and his time as a preparation for the realisation of his proof as well as increasing his faith. It is certainly impermissible to kill someone who has been disobedient or to throw him in the sea or in a fire. Rather, he may only be reprimanded or suffer the capital punishments of the Sacred Law (Al-hudud) in accordance with his crime.'* Abu Bakr Aj-Jassas also stated explicitly that this ruling was specific to Yunus (Jonah) *peace be upon him* in the book *Ahkam Al-Quran* printed by Dar Al-kutub Al-'Ilmiyya [3/497].

(2) *It is related by Ibn Hisham in As-Sira An-Nabawiyya [2/112, 113] that each of Banu 'Awf, Banu Bayada, Banu Sa'ida and Banu Al-Harith wanted to take the reins of =*

Someone might ask if a boat would really sink or float because of just one person making it lighter or heavier. To which we would reply, 'Yes.' Have you not heard of 'the straw that broke the camel's back'? When you load a camel, you do so, on the basis of what it can carry. If you put one stick too many on it, it will have to kneel down because of the weight. The reality is that it is not actually the single stick or straw that breaks the back of the camel, but the whole load of sticks. The last straw is just the thing that tipped the scales and took it to the point where it became unbearable. Prophet Yunus' (Jonah's) ship was just the same, such that avoiding sinking meant throwing someone overboard. The death of one is preferable to the death of everyone.

We learn from this case in point that when danger threatens a group, it is permissible for one of them to repel it, and it is casting lots which decides who will be the one.

Then Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says, '...whereupon the great fish swallowed him, for he had been blameworthy.' (*as-Saffat*: 142) Blame is a form of criticism. There is a difference between something deserving blame and something deserving punishment. Prophet Yunus (Jonah) *peace be upon him* did something for which he was criticised by his Lord. It is as though Allah *the Exalted* said to him, 'Indeed, you were hasty when you grew tired of your people and left them because of the initial harm that came to you from them. You should have been patient and endured the harm for the sake of your mission.' So blame is a form of criticism, but it does not reach the level of punishment.

Usually criticism does not arise between lovers because they want to preserve the affection between them; this is why a poet said,

As for reproach between lovers, it is nothing,

For love can be healthy and true despite reproach.⁽¹⁾

It is obvious that people reproach only the ones that they care for in order to maintain their companionship.

= Prophet Muhammad's camel. He said to them, 'Get out of its way, for it is under orders.' It went until it knelt on the land of Banu 'Adiyy ibn An-Najjar.

(1) This line is from a poem by poet laureate, Ahmad Shawqi. He died in 1932 at the age of 66. This is the beginning of a poem with twelve lines, in the meter of (*Bahr Al-Kamil*). [Al-Mawsu'a Ash-Shi'riyya]

So, to recap, there are numerous things here that prove our point about Prophet Yunus (Jonah): the first of them is Allah's saying, 'when he fled like a runaway slave...' (*as-Saffat*: 140) which means a slave of Allah. Then, '...thinking that We had no power over him...' (*al-Anbiya*: 87) means that we would not restrain him; this was his optimistic opinion of Allah. Then, '...for he had been blameworthy' (*as-Saffat*: 142); Allah *the Almighty* found fault with him only for something he did that was not correct for a prophet, and this is evidence of affection.

Concerning Allah's saying, 'And had he not been of those who [even in the deep darkness of their distress are able to] extol Allah's limitless Glory (*Al-musabbihin*), he would indeed have remained in its belly till the Day when all shall be raised from the dead' (*as-Saffat*: 143-144). The word *At-tasbih* (extolling Allah's Glory) means to declare Allah to be absolutely above everything (*At-tanzih Al-mutlaq*). So his being from amongst those who extol Allah's limitless Glory means that although he was being scolded, he was not punished or harmed. Had it not been for his faith and glorification, he would have remained in the fish's stomach until the Day of Resurrection.

This issue of the Prophet Yunus (Jonah) being upbraided by Allah *the Almighty* for leaving and abandoning his people just because they belied him and were stubborn reminds us of Allah's custom with His messengers, i.e. aiding them and succouring them: 'Behold, We shall indeed succour Our apostles and those who have attained to faith, [both] in this world's life and on the Day when all the witnesses shall stand up.' (*Ghafir*: 51) This victory, however, can be delayed, even though Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* is perfectly capable of granting them victory from the very first. Allah *the Most High* however desires two things from this: The first is that corruption worsens and becomes widespread so that people will feel constrained and consequently look for the truth and for goodness and that they will work towards it. The second is that Allah *the Exalted* can put those who believe in the messengers to test and distinguish those of them who are steadfast and capable of bearing the troubles of the mission thereafter. Thus, the postponement of victory is not a setback for messengers or an abandonment of them, for Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* would not send a messenger only to abandon him.

فَبَدَّلْنَاهُ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ ﴿١٤٥﴾ وَأَبَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِّنْ يَقْطِينٍ ﴿١٤٦﴾
وَأَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ مِائَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ فَآمَنُوا فَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿١٤٨﴾

But We cast him out, sick, on to a barren shore [145] And made a gourd tree grow above him [146] We sent him to a hundred thousand people or more [147] They believed, so We let them live out their lives [148] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 145 - 148)

Let us note at the onset that Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says, ‘...whereupon the great fish swallowed him ...’ (*as-Saffat*: 142), attributing the action to the fish, but in this verse when talking of Yunus' (Jonah's) salvation, the action is attributed to Allah *the Glorified and Exalted*. He says, ‘But We caused him to be cast...’ (*as-Saffat*: 145) which means he was thrown out ‘...on a desert shore...’ (*as-Saffat*: 145), i.e. on a vast area of empty ground ‘...sick [at heart] as he was’ (*as-Saffat*: 145); this means that he was sick or worn out from the troubles he encountered in the fish's stomach. Alternatively, it could mean he was sick from thinking about what happened between his people and himself. Thus, it could mean either physical sickness or spiritual sickness.

His Lord however did not leave him alone on this piece of deserted land after he had been regurgitated by the fish and was in this unhealthy state. In many ways, he was like a newly born baby. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* caused a creeping plant (*shajarat al-yaqtin*) to grow for him: ‘and caused a creeping plant to grow over him [out of the barren soil].’ (*as-Saffat*: 146) This is a plant with broad leaves which the scholars identify as being a pumpkin (*Al-qar'*). It covered and sheltered him, protecting him from flies and insects, for he had come out surrounded by substances from the fish's stomach which made him all sticky, impeding his skin from breathing and impeding his health. This is why when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked about *shajarat al-yaqtin*,⁽¹⁾ he said, ‘It is the plant of my brother Yunus (Jonah).’⁽²⁾

(1) Any plant that does not stand on a trunk, such as the gourd, the melon or the colocynth is called *yaqtin* by Arabs [Ibn Jarir At-Tabari in his exegesis of this verse, vol. 22]. Az-Zujaj said, ‘The derivation of the word *Al-yaqtin* is from the word *qutun* by virtue of place, which means it grows there and is thus on the pattern of *yaf'il*. It is also said that it is a foreign word. [Fath Al-Qadir, vol. 6 by Ash-Shawkani in his exegesis of verse 136 of the chapter of *as-Saffat*].

(2) Ibn Hajar said in *Fath Al-Bari* in the chapter *Kitab Al-At'ima*, Hadith 5064 that Muslim related this Hadith with the following wording, ‘and he used to like pumpkin’.=

The pronoun ‘him’ in the words ‘*alaih* over him refers to Prophet Yunus (Jonah) *peace be upon him* and means that this plant grew after the fish had thrown him onto the land and was not present there before that.

So, the fish swallowing Prophet Yunus (Jonah) was a Mercy from Allah to him, compared to him being lost in the vast sea, thrown about by waves, along with no one knowing what had become of him. As for the fish, it had a will of its own, could keep him safe, and cast him out onto the land. Thus, this series of events was a Mercy from Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* to Prophet Yunus (Jonah) *peace be upon him*.

Then Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says, ‘And [then] We sent him [once again] to [his people,] a hundred thousand [souls] or more, and [this time] they believed [in him]—and so We allowed them to enjoy their life during the time allotted to them’ (*as-Saffat*: 147-148). It is as though Allah *the Almighty* is telling us, ‘Beware of thinking that what happened with Yunus (Jonah) detracted from his Message or made us change our mind about him as a messenger, for he was sent to ‘... a hundred thousand [souls] or more’ (*as-Saffat*: 147). The words ‘a hundred thousand’ in this verse could be a broad expression meaning a huge number since during times gone by one thousand was the largest number that people knew.

When, after she fell captive, the Muslims wanted to ransom the daughter of Khosrau,⁽¹⁾ Azin; they offered the one into whose lot she had fallen so many thousands, and he agreed. His companions asked him after the deal was done, ‘Why did you not ask for more than that? They could have paid a huge sum for her.’ He replied, ‘By Allah, if I knew of a number greater than a thousand, I would have said it.’

As for Allah’s saying, ‘... or more’ (*as-Saffat*: 147), are we to infer that the Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* did not know the exact number of people there?

= *An-Nasa’i related it as follows, ‘He used to like pumpkin and would say, “Indeed, it is the plant of my brother Yunus (Jonah).”’ Ibn Juzay said, ‘He chose to mention the pumpkin because it has large leaves and cool shade, and flies do not go near it. Yunus’ (Jonah’s) skin was in such a state when he came out of the sea that it could not tolerate flies. This was part of Allah’s gentleness and His plan.’*

(1) The story of paying the ransom for the daughter of Khosrau

No, of course He knew it, and had He wished, He would have stated it precisely, but His saying, '... or more' (*as-Saffat*: 147) is not to indicate an increase as such; rather, it is to confirm the number of the preceding one hundred thousand. It is like the one who says, 'I gave so-and-so his due and more.' He is not talking so much about the increase as he is confirming the base number, and that it was not deficient. This is because the number 'a thousand' can be used to refer to a number that is nearly a thousand, like nine hundred and ninety-nine. Thus, to reiterate, the increase in this verse is a confirmation of the full number.

Then, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: 'and [this time] they believed [in him], and so We allowed them to enjoy their life during the time allotted to them' (*as-Saffat*: 148). As long as any form of enjoyment is restricted in time, in Allah's eyes, it ends, for it is but the pleasure of this world. When the enjoyment of this world ends for a believer, however, he moves on to that which is better than it. Thus, one should not say, 'Allah ends the believer's pleasure' because the end of the pleasure of this world takes him to the delights of the next world. One's enjoyment in this world is limited to the length of his life in it as well as his abilities and opportunities. As for the delights of the Afterlife, they are ongoing and are granted in accordance with the abilities of the Bestower. This particular one is taken straight from the pleasures of this world to the delights of the next is pure munificence. Thus, Allah's saying, '...during the time allotted to them' (*as-Saffat*: 148), is to be understood as a kindness from Him.

After this Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* moves on to another matter.

فَاسْتَفْتِهِمُ الرِّبَّكَ الْبَنَاتُ وَلَهُمُ الْبَنُونَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ أَمْ خَلَقْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةَ إِنثًا وَهُمْ
شَاهِدُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ مِّنْ أَفْكَهٍ لِّقَوْلٍ ﴿١٥١﴾ وَلَدَ اللَّهُ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٥٢﴾

Now [Muhammad], ask the disbelievers: is it true that your Lord has daughters, while they choose sons for themselves?

[149] Did We create the angels as females while they were watching? [150] No indeed! It is one of their lies when they say [151] 'God has begotten.' How they lie! [152]

(The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 149 - 152)

In Allah's saying, 'And now ask them to enlighten you (*fa 'staftihim*) ...' (*as-Saffat*: 149), the word *istafta* means to seek an opinion like the word

futya. The word *Al-futya* literally means ‘the limit of strength’, and from this are derived the words *Al-fata* (a youth) and *Al-futuwwa* (chivalry). The word *istafta* means to seek that which will strengthen one’s ability to have an opinion (*fatwa*). If someone does not know the religious ruling in a particular case, he asks about it and seeks a *fatwa*, i.e. having been weak in an area of the religion, he seeks to become strong in that matter. Other examples of words derived from this root can be seen in Allah’s saying: ‘Said some [of them]: "We heard a youth (*fata*) speak of these [gods with scorn]. He is called Ibrahim (Abraham)."' (*al-Anbiya*: 60) Also, regarding the people of the cave, He says, ‘... Behold, they were young men (*fitya*) who had adhered to faith in their Sustainer ...’ (*al-Kahf*: 13) which means that they were not old men. It is remarkable that they should have full faith in the prime and vigour of their youth, for this is a time when strong desires and passions are to be expected. This is why it is narrated in a Hadith, ‘Your Lord wonders at the youth who has no passion.’

Allah *the Almighty* has clarified for us in standards by which we judge societies that there are twelve types of people: six of them are beloved, and six are hateful, and we seek refuge with Allah *the Glorified and Exalted*. Of the beloved are those who are loved and those who are loved more, and amongst the hateful are those who are hated and those who are hated more. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says in a Qudsi Hadith, 'I love three, and My love for three is greater: I love the obedient old man, yet my love for the obedient young man is greater; I love the generous rich man, yet my love for the generous poor man is greater; I love the humble poor man, yet my love for the humble rich man is greater.' These six types are those beloved to Allah, and you can deduce from their opposites those who are those hated by Allah, and we seek refuge with Him.

So, the obedient young man is more beloved to Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* because he has lustful urges, along with their excuses and their vigour, but he nevertheless conquers them and treads a path of piety. This is opposed to the old man whose lusts have passed away, and his urges have weakened. The generous rich man and the humble poor man are similar to this. These three types represent the pinnacle of progress in a society, and the pinnacle of Allah’s vicegerency on earth. Imagine a society where the youth are obedient,

the poor are generous and the rich are humble! The next level down is a society where the old men are obedient, and the rich are humble and generous. The next level down is a society that is hateful to Allah, and with Him we seek refuge.

So, 'And now ask them to enlighten you (*fa 'staftihim*)...' (*as-Saffat*: 149), means, 'Ask them for their opinion, for it will strengthen your argument.' This is why we say to the *Mufti* whom the people like to take *fatwa* from, 'The people want you to strengthen them with your opinion, so do not take them down the easy road, since, by doing so, you will encourage them to take dispensations, and by that you will not strengthen them but weaken them. Rather give them the correct ruling, for in that they will find true strength.'

Why does Allah *the Exalted* tell Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to seek the opinion of his people? The scholars say that it is because when a matter is ever so clear to a speaker, he says to himself, 'I need not judge this matter. Rather, I will let my opponent judge.' Why is this? Since he is certain that, if his opponent thinks about the matter, he will find that there is only one answer. It is like when someone denies some good, you have done for them and you say to them, 'I'll settle for your judgement. Tell me, did I not stand by your side on such-and-such a day?' Thus, you frame the issue as a question because you know the answer he must give. If, however, you just state the matter plainly, it can be accepted or denied.

This is why Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* used a question in His argument of this case: 'And now ask them to enlighten you. Has your Sustainer daughters, whereas they would have [only] sons?' (*as-Saffat*: 149) This is an incredulous question, i.e. 'How could you say this?' Because they said that the angels are Allah's daughters, and then they said that Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* has a son. How could this be since when one of them is given the good news of a daughter, his face turns dark and he is angry, and he retreats from people because of the bad news he has been given? Then, he thinks, 'avoiding all the people because of the [alleged] evil of the glad tiding which he has received. [And debating within himself:] Shall he keep this [child] despite the disgrace (*Al-hun*) [which he feels over it], or shall he bury it in the dust? O, evil indeed is whatever they decide!' (*an-Nahl*: 59)

Allah's saying, '... shall he bury it in the dust ...' (*an-Nahl*: 59) refers to one being alive since the emotions of parenthood mean that a parent cannot bear to strangle his child with his own hands or to see it die. This is why they would get rid of them by burying them in the ground so they could not see them.

In another place Allah *the Exalted* says, 'Yet, [as to themselves] when one of them is given the news [of the birth of a female child], the like of which [sex] he ascribes to the Most Gracious [Allah], his face becomes gloomy, and he is choked with inward grief. [Is he your god] who is brought up in the midst of ornaments and who is unable to make a clear expression [to an argument] and a plain speech in disputation [and discussions].' (*az-Zukhruf*: 17-18) This means that: do you ascribe to Allah *the Almighty* those who are raised in luxury and adornment, namely daughters, yet you would take sons for yourselves who can work, strive, and bear hardship? This is why Allah judged this matter to be an outrageous and unfair distribution. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says, 'Why for yourselves [you would choose only] male offspring, whereas to Him [you assign] female. That, lo and behold, is an unfair division (*qisma diza*)!' (*an-Najm*: 21-22) Let us look at this word (*diza*) unfair in this verse. By Allah, had it come in other than the Quran, it would have been heavy on the tongue and unpalatable, yet in its context in Allah's speech it is natural and fluid. Why is this so? Thus it is so because it has been put there to express this astonishing and unjust judgement, something that could only be properly articulated by means of this strange word which rings like a bell in one's ear.

Then Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says, 'Or is it that We have created the angels female, and they [who believe them to be divine] have witnessed [that act of creation]?' (*as-Saffat*: 150) So, you are wrong. Indeed, in both cases, this is the most idiotic folly. The first is that you say the angels are female, and the second is that you desire males for yourselves, leaving Allah with daughters. Who was it who told you that the angels were female? Sons and daughters only come from marriage and procreation, but angels do not get married nor do they procreate or be described as male or female.

Moreover, whoever wishes to say that angels are female should have knowledge of their creation. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And [yet] they claim that the angels, who in themselves are but beings created by the Most Gracious,

are females. [But] did they witness their creation? This false claim of theirs will be recorded, and they will be called to account [for it on Judgment Day]!’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 19) He also says in the chapter of *al-Kahf*: ‘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) It is Allah Who is informing us of this reality. ‘... And neither do I [have any need to] take as My helpers those [beings] that lead [men] astray.’ (*al-Kahf*: 51) This is referring to 'assistants' in the process of creation, and this exposes those who want to come and talk about creation as if they witnessed it, saying that the angels are female, that men are descended from primates and all their other assertions.

Allah *Glorified is He* warns us of them to give us a natural immunity to their views. It is sufficient for us to know that this matter is from the unseen, and they can have no knowledge of it, except that which comes from the Creator. Nevertheless, He *the Almighty* has put signs in the universe that clarify the truth of the events we did not witness.

Allah *the Exalted* negates their prattle with His saying: ‘And in everything have We created opposites, so that you might bear in mind [that Allah alone is one].’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 49) Each species stands on its own, and nothing evolves from anything else. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* also says, ‘Limitless in His Glory is He Who has created opposites ...’ (*Ya Sin*: 36).

As for angels, they have a special constitution to which duality is inappropriate; they are neither male nor female, and they do not eat, drink, or sleep, etc. If someone thinks that this is irrational then just put it with the other things which we believe in of the unseen that are irrational and we have been informed of by our Lord. These unseen matters of which Allah has informed us are evidence of our faith in the One Who informed us of them.

Then Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* moves to another case by saying: ‘O, verily, it is out of their own [inclination to] falsehood that some people assert, "Allah has begotten [a son]", and verily, they are lying [too, when they say]’ (*as-Saffat*: 151-152). So, their insolence towards Allah *the Almighty* does not stop at them describing the angels as female, nor at their ascribing daughters to Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* but they go on to insult Him by saying, ‘Allah

has begotten [a son] ...' (*as-Saffat*: 152). It is though Allah *Glorified is He* is loosening the reins on these arrogant people and giving them space until He says something that will expose their lies. Since they say, '... Allah has taken unto Himself a son ...' (*al-Baqara*: 116) and yet now they say, 'Allah has begotten a son'; there is a big difference between these two statements. 'Allah has begotten a son' attributes a child directly to Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* whereas, 'Allah has taken into Himself a son' means that He did not give birth, but He adopted a son. He did not have a child, and then He took one. Allah *the Exalted* refutes their saying, 'Allah has begotten a son' in His statement: 'Say: He is the One God. God, the Eternal, the Uncaused Cause of All Who Exists. He begets not, and neither is He begotten, and there is nothing that could be compared with Him' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1-4). Furthermore, He refutes their saying, '... Allah has taken unto Himself a son ...' (*al-Baqara*: 116), when He says, '... no consort has He ever taken unto Himself, nor a son!' (*al-Jinn*: 3)

Let us look at this matter of adopting children in view of our own reality. Why do people want or strive for a son? Why are we sad when we fail to produce offspring and anxious when the child is late? The scholars say it is because a child is an extension of his father and his posterity. This is why a man rejoices at his son. He rejoices even more at his grandson because while the son guarantees his posterity for another generation, his grandson guarantees it for two. What a strange place the world is! How we wrangle over it and cling on to it, even just to be remembered. If the world does not last for you, then how will you benefit from other peoples' worldly matters?

The poet Shawqi *may Allah have mercy on him* spoke of this issue when he had a grandson and rejoicing in the matter, said,

Guarantee for yourself after death your memory,

For to be recalled is another life for man

There can be no doubt that Shawqi does not intend a son by 'memory', rather, he means righteous works and a beneficial influence that immortalise the remembrance of the one who performs them.

So, a man needs a son because when he dies, his son will carry his name and memory. As for Allah *the Exalted* He is everlasting, undying. 'Abd Al-Muttalib

found that none of his sons were surviving, so he pledged to Allah that if He gave him some sons he would sacrifice one of them to Him as an offering. Men need children so that they can have descendants. There are some who say, 'If I die, who will mourn over me?' Glory be to Allah! All you have guaranteed is that you will be mourned and that your son after you will be mourned; it is just one dying after another.

Yes, indeed, these are the reasons why we need sons and why we strive for them. As for Allah *the Almighty* though, He is Ever living and never dies, so how would a son benefit Him, and why would He adopt one when the dominion of the heavens and the earth belong to Him?

This is why Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* replies to them, 'Had Allah willed to take unto Himself a son, He could have chosen anyone that He wanted out of whatever He has created ...' (*az-Zumar*: 4). Had He so willed, He would have elected whoever He wanted; He would choose, not you. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* however was decorous in his worship of his Lord, and this is why he said, 'Say [O, Prophet]: "If the Most Gracious [truly] had a son, I would be the first to worship him!"' (*az-Zukhruf*: 81) This means that if the Most Merciful were to have a son, and He informed us of such, then I (Prophet Muhammad) would be the first to believe in him.

In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says as an answer to them: 'Although it is inconceivable that the Most Gracious should take unto Himself a son!' (*Maryam*: 92) So Allah *the Most High* has not adopted a son. It is not appropriate for Him to do so, and it never will be. There can be no concept of parenthood or childhood in relation to Him. He is everlasting and never dies such that He would need a son to perpetuate His memory. He is free of all need of His creation, and the heavens and the earth belong to Him. All people are His created beings and His dependants; He does not need descendants as you do.

Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says, '... no consort has He ever taken unto Himself, nor a son!' (*al-Jinn*: 3) This means that He has no spouse such that He could have children. So these are all fabrications and lies against Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* which is why He ascribed falsehood to them, and then lies in an emphatic form in His saying: 'O, verily, it is out of their own

[inclination to] falsehood that some people assert, "Allah has begotten [a son]", and verily, they are lying' (*as-Saffat*: 151-152).

However, why is one described as falsehood and the other as lying? The scholars say it was to preserve the temporary authority that they had before Islam for themselves, the temporary authority that gave them leadership and grandeur. It is well known that the Jews in Medina had a considerable status when it came to money, knowledge and war and that they awaited victory over the disbelievers through Prophet Muhammad, but '... whenever there came unto them something which they recognised [as the truth], they would deny it...' (*al-Baqara*: 89). Why was that so? That was due to them realising that he would take away their authority.

Allah *the Exalted* named their lies (*ifk*) falsehood because this word refers to intentional one. Inventing lies intentionally is called *ifk* because it is an inversion of reality. Similarly, *Al-Mu'tafika* was a village that Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* turned upside down, along with its inhabitants, and on account of this it was given this name.

Intentionally lying inverts reality because if a man states a case, this case is said to be a linguistic association. If this is preceded by an actual association that agrees with a certain given speech, then the speech is true. If its relationship to the speech is non-existent, then it is a lie. Lies come in degrees. The biggest and worst of them are falsehoods told of Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* in matters that are unambiguous, or in the basic tenets of belief in Him. Telling lies in this case is no small matter; it is not like telling a lie about a few pounds, for example; rather, lies in this field are at the very pinnacle of belief.

'O, verily, it is out of their own [inclination to] falsehood that some people assert Allah has begotten [a son]' (*as-Saffat*: 152). So they actually attributed a son directly to Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* not just the adoption of a son. This is why He judges them by saying: '... and, verily, they are lying [too, when they say]' (*as-Saffat*: 151-152). Yet, this is a statement, and while there is no doubt that a statement from Allah *the Most High* is truthful, intellectually a statement is open to confirmation or denial. For this reason Allah *Glorified is He* grasps them with another rhetorical device from which

they will find no escape. He confirms His speech in the minds of the reciters and those listening and forces them to admit it. He says,

أَصْطَفَى الْبَنَاتِ عَلَى الْبَنِينَ ﴿١٥٣﴾ مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ ﴿١٥٤﴾ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٥٥﴾

Did He truly choose daughters in preference to sons? [153]

What is the matter with you? How do you form your judgment? [154] Do you not reflect? [155]

(The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 153 - 155)

The letter *hamza* at the beginning of the verb ‘He has chosen (*astafa*)...’ (*as-Saffat*: 153) is the one that makes a sentence into a question (*hamzat al-istifham*). This is an incredulous question because Allah *Glorified is He* is the Creator of sons and daughters. Why would He choose the weaker of the two sexes when He created them both?

These claims are rationally unacceptable and the case is clear. This is why Allah *the Almighty* then poses another two questions in wonder at their speech, ‘What is amiss with you and your judgment? Will you not then take heed?’ (*as-Saffat*: 154-155) In other words, why not use your intellects? The case is clear-cut. We have already outlined how Allah *the Exalted* instead of using a statement, asks them questions so that they might provide the answers themselves by way of confirmation, and confirmation is the master of proofs, as they say. A statement, however, can be either believed or denied on an intellectual level. Thus, this is rational evidence that voids their claims. The problem is that minds may differ about rational evidence. This is why Allah now takes us to evidence from revelation. Perhaps, they have a Book they study that clarifies this issue:

أَمْ لَكُمْ سُلْطَانٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٥٦﴾ فَاتُوا بِكُتُبِكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

Do you perhaps have clear authority? [156]

Bring your scriptures, if you are telling the truth [157]

(The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 156 - 157)

Having refuted their claims with rational evidence, Allah *the Most High* now refutes them with proof relating to revelation. The word *sultan* (evidence) in this verse could mean either an authoritative proof or authority in terms of power

and strength. The difference between the two is that the former convinces an opponent, and he yields willingly. As for the latter, he is forced and yields against his will. Thus, the meaning is that they have no authority, neither proof nor power. Similar to this is Allah's saying, quoting Satan (Iblis) on the Day of Judgement, '...Yet, I had no power (*sultan*) at all over you. I but called you, and you responded to me...' (*Ibrahim*: 22); in other words, I (Satan) could not force you to obey me, nor did I have any proof to convince you with; rather, you already had an inclination to misguidance and disobedience.

Allah's saying, 'Produce, then, that divine writ of yours, if you are speaking the truth!' (*as-Saffat*: 157) means that if you have some authority for what you say, then bring your Book, namely, one which has been revealed to you by Allah that informs you of these things.

وَجَعَلُوا بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْجَنَّةِ نَسَبًا وَلَقَدْ عَلِمَتِ الْجِنَّةُ إِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾
سُبْحَنَ اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾

**They claim that He has kinship with the jinn, yet the jinn
them- selves know that they will be brought before Him [158]
God is far above what they attribute to Him [159]
(The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 158 - 159)**

The word *Al-jinna* (hidden forces) has a *kasra* on the letter *jim*. The word *Al-janna* is similar to this but has a *fatha* on the *jim*. These words, along with the words *jinn* and *majnun*, are all derived from the root *jann*, which means to be hidden. The 'hidden forces' referred to in this verse are the angels and are so named because they are hidden from our sight. Similarly the word *Al-janna* (garden) is named thus because its plants and trees hide the one who enters it. Alternatively, it could be said to be because it protects the one who enters it by providing for all his needs, such that he does not need to leave it for anything. The *majnun* (insane person) is so named because his intellect is obscured.

The meaning in this verse is that they asserted a relationship between Allah *the Almighty* and the angels when they said angels were Allah's daughters: '...although [even] these invisible forces know well that, verily, they [who thus blaspheme against Allah] shall indeed be arraigned...' (*as-Saffat*: 158); what this means is that angels know that polytheists will be summoned to punishment.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* replies to them, declaring His transcendence above resembling His creation by saying, 'Limitless is Allah in His Glory, above anything that men may devise by way of definition!' (*as-Saffat*: 159) The phrase, *subhan Allah* (limitless is Allah in His Glory) is something we think of all the time regarding anything that might lead us to imagine that Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* resembles His creation. Allah's transcendence is something that was present before there was anyone to declare it. The word *subhan* refers to the absolute transcendence of Allah, before He created anyone to declare such. Then when He created the creation, it glorified Him. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says, 'All that is in the heavens and all that is on earth extols Allah's limitless Glory, for He alone is Almighty, Truly Wise.' (*al-Hashr*: 1) and 'All that is in the heavens and all that is on earth extols Allah's limitless Glory...' (*at-Taghabun*: 1); in other words, they are constantly glorifying Him in the present and into the future until the Day of Judgment, and so long as this transcendence of Allah *the Almighty* is affirmed before creation and after it, on a continual basis from the past, in the present and into the future, then be warned, O, most noble of created beings, for whom the whole creation was made, against not also being of those who glorify Him or of deviating from this harmonious creation in its glorification: 'Extol the limitless Glory of your Sustainer's name, [the glory of] the All-Highest' (*al-A'la*: 1). Thus, the meaning of 'Limitless is Allah in His Glory, above anything that men may devise by way of definition!' (*as-Saffat*: 159) is that Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* is transcendent above the lies and assertions of these polytheists and that He is transcendent above having any kind of relationship with the angels.

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ فَإِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾
مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ بِفَاتِنِينَ ﴿١٦٢﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ هُوَ صَالٍ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١٦٣﴾

**The true servants of God do not do such things [160] and
neither you nor what you worship [161] can lure away from
God any [162] except those who will burn in Hell [163]
(The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 160 - 163)**

The exception in Allah's saying, 'Not thus, however, [behave] Allah's true servants' (*as-Saffat*: 160) is from those mentioned in His saying: '...verily, they

[who thus blaspheme against Allah] shall indeed be arraigned...’ (*as-Saffat*: 158). Allah *the Exalted* has exempted His true servants from being associated with those who are summoned for punishment. Allah *Glorified is He* then says, ‘for verily, neither you [blasphemers] nor the objects of your worship’ (*as-Saffat*: 161); this means that those other than Allah ‘can cause anyone to fall prey to your temptation’ (*as-Saffat*: 162). Furthermore, neither you nor the deities you worship in place of Me can seduce any of My creation away from Me; you cannot pervert Allah’s creation. It is said, ‘So-and-so seduced so-and-so’s wife’, which means he corrupted her. Thus, the meaning of the verse is that you are unable to corrupt the state of affairs between Myself and My angels.

How could it be otherwise when angels were only created so that they might love and worship Me? ‘They extol His limitless Glory by night and by day, never flagging [therein].’ (*al-Anbiya*: 20) How could you corrupt them when they are free of you and your worship of them and when they in fact curse you? How could you possibly seduce them away from Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* ?

In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* refutes their arguments by saying: ‘Those whom they call upon [apart from Him, thinking them to be a means of gaining nearness to Allah] themselves seek nearness to their Lord and solicit His favour (even) those of them who are nearest [to Allah are still competing to be closer to Him] and hope for His mercy’ (*al-Isra*: 57) This verse indicates that those whom they worship besides Allah *the Almighty* desire for themselves to get closer to Him. In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* orders Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to say: ‘If there were with Him gods as they say, then certainly they would have been able to seek a way to the Lord of power.’ (*al-Isra*: 42)

You cannot, then, seduce those whom you worship away from their Lord because they are sincere in their worship of Him and compete with one another to get closer to Him.

Allah's saying: ‘unless it be such as rushes towards the blazing fire [of his own accord]!’ (*as-Saffat*: 163) means that they can only seduce those of mankind who are content with their worship and who will, therefore, end in hellfire. To reproach idol worshippers, Allah *the Exalted* informs them that they will not be punished in the hellfire except with the very stones they used

to worship, which they will find with them in it. It may be asked, 'What is wrong with such stones that they worshipped to be brought with them in the Hellfire?' In response, Allah *Glorified is He* states in the following verses:

وَمَا مِنَّا إِلَّا لَهُ مَقَامٌ مَّعْلُومٌ ﴿١٦٤﴾ وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الصَّافُّونَ ﴿١٦٥﴾ وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْمُسَبِّحُونَ ﴿١٦٦﴾

[The angels say], 'Every single one of us has his appointed place [164] we are ranged in ranks [165] We glorify God [166]
(The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 164 - 166)

When such stones are heated up to be used as a punishment for polytheists, they are not treated as such as a punishment for a misdeed they did, but due to that being their assigned place and they execute Allah's Commandments against these rebels: 'And there is none of us but has an assigned place' (*as-Saffat*: 164). 'An assigned place' mentioned in the verse means a rank and a status. The angels are of different ranks and levels; the least of them is not envious of the highest, and the highest have no contempt for the lowest because such places were assigned to them by Allah's Decree which they revere. This is a lesson for us to learn; that everyone should respect the rank and status of others. Respecting people of senior ranks alludes to the fact of honouring Allah's Decree Who placed them in a higher position, even if they happened to be once in a lower one. The world, as I mentioned earlier, is not mechanically determined; rather, everything is created according to Allah's Decree and Wisdom.

It is as though the angels say, 'How could we be Allah's daughters? How could we be worshipped besides Allah when we ourselves have been made subservient to His worship? We are His forces, lined up awaiting His orders: 'and most surely we are they who draw themselves out in ranks' (*as-Saffat*: 165); this means that we stand in ordered rows. Standing in rows are an indication of orderliness and an expression of discipline and commitment. To this effect, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was narrated to have said, 'Indeed, Allah does not look to the crooked row.'⁽¹⁾ This is because you are

(1) It is recommended for the Imam (who leads prayer) to order the rows to be straightened and the gaps to be filled before starting to pray. Anas ibn Malik *Allah be pleased with him*=

standing in front of Allah *the Almighty* and thus, you should show Him proof of your commitment, cohesion, and equality.

This is also the case in war. Allah says: 'Surely, Allah loves those who fight in His Way in ranks as if they were a firm and compact wall.' (*as-Saffat*: 4) This simile is instructive because 'a firm and compact wall' is one in which the bricks are not coming loose since they are held in place by the building of which they are part. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was inspecting the rows in preparation for one of his battles, he saw one of the soldiers sticking out of line so he indicated to him with his stick to stand with the straight line.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* states that the angels say: 'And we are most surely they who declare the Glory [of Allah].' (*as-Saffat*: 166) The angels wonder how they could be content to be worshipped besides Allah *the Most High* when they were only created to glorify Him.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

وَإِنْ كَانُوا لَيَقُولُونَ ﴿١٦٧﴾ لَوَآءَنَّا عِنْدَنَا ذِكْرًا مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٦٨﴾
لَكُنَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلِصِينَ ﴿١٦٩﴾ فَكَفَرُوا بِهِ ۖ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾

**[The disbelievers] used to say [167] If only we had a
scripture like previous people [168] we would be true
servants of God [169] yet now they reject [the Quran]. They
will soon realize [170] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 167 - 170)**

'A reminder', as stated in the verse, refers to scriptures, '...like previous people,' meaning those that were similar to that which were revealed to previous prophets. Then, Allah says that they say, 'we would be true servants of Allah.' How strange it is that they should seek to justify their polytheism on this basis,

= narrated, 'Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would turn to face us before making his (takbir) and say, "Come close together and straighten up." This was narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim. They also narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "Straighten your lines, for straightening the lines is a part of the perfection of prayer."

although Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent down to all of them. Earlier prophets, who came before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were sent to a specific people for a specific time and were all committed to delivering Allah's legislations to His creation. As for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he was the only prophet deputised by Allah to make laws for people because his Message is universal in terms of time and place until the Day of Judgment.

How is it, then, that they wanted a revelation from their forefathers when they had the last of all prophets with them? He was given general commands by Allah and then he clarified, expounded, and set them out in detail.

Allah's saying, 'Yet, now they reject ...' (*as-Saffat*: 170) means that when the prophet they were asking for was sent down to them, they disbelieved in him. Therefore, this is only a matter of arrogance, disputation, and obstinacy in refusing to accept the truth and following it.

In Arabic, the letter *sin* and the word *sawf* both mean 'will' and indicate the future tense, but *sawf* refers to a more distant time than *sin*. Hence, in the Quranic verse, '...They will soon realise' (*as-Saffat*: 170), there is a very inclusive time phrase. The verb, '...realise' (*as-Saffat*: 170) is in the present case which is used for the present and the immediate future, while the word *sawf* denotes the distant future. Accordingly, *sawf* is used in this verse because amongst those who lived at the time of the revelation were those who would die before witnessing the recompense of the polytheists or the victory of Islam. Regarding the disbelievers who died before witnessing such events, they will know of which in the Hereafter when they see the punishment. A believer, on the other hand, has no need of this knowledge because he already believes in Allah's revelation. An example of such belief is the saying of 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* 'Were the veil [of the Unseen] to be removed from me, I would not increase in certainty.'

When Muslims were in tight circumstances and distress, before the opening of Mecca, Allah revealed the verse: '[Their] assembly will be defeated, and they will turn their backs [in retreat].' (*al-Qamar*: 45) In the verse, the letter *sin* is used to denote the near future, which surprised 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* the one whose opinion was in accordance with that

which the Quran would soon reveal on many occasions. He said, ‘What assemblies are those which will be defeated when we are unable to protect ourselves or our families?’ When it happened, though, and Muslims entered Mecca as triumphant warriors, he said,⁽¹⁾ ‘Allah *Glorified is He* spoke the truth: “[Their] assembly will be defeated, and they will turn their backs [in retreat].”’ (*al-Qamar*: 45)

A believer ardently believes in what Allah *the Almighty* tells to happen, for it is a thing preordained in His Knowledge and so long as it was destined in pre-eternity, and given that there is no force that can oppose what Allah *Glorified is He*, has destined, and that He does not become incapacitated in any way that prevents Him from implementing His decrees, thus, it must necessarily come to pass.

A case in point here is the Quranic verse: ‘Allah's Commandment came, therefore do not desire to hasten it.’ (*an-Nahl*: 1) In Arabic, a past tense verb, as maintained by grammarians, describes an action in the past, whereas a present tense verb describes an action in the present or the future. However, how can one resolve the conflict between the past tense in ‘... came ...’ and the prohibition to hasten it in ‘do not desire to hasten it’, which denotes that this will happen in the future? The answer is that the one speaking in this verse is Allah *the Almighty* not any of us. He is not bound by time and when He tells of something, then it will happen, and nothing can stop it, for it has been destined in pre-eternity. Thus, Allah’s Judgment has been issued in pre-eternity, so do not seek to hurry its occurrence.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

(1) ‘Ikrima Allah be pleased with him said, ‘When the verse, “[Their] assembly will be defeated, and they will turn their backs [in retreat]”’ (*al-Qamar*: 45) was revealed, ‘Umar said, “Which assembly is to be defeated?!”’ ‘Umar Allah be pleased with him said, “On the day of the battle of Badr, I saw Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him seizing his chainmail and saying, ‘[Their] assembly will be defeated, and they will turn their backs [in retreat]’ (*al-Qamar*: 45), and so that day I understood the interpretation of the verse.”’ This was narrated by Ibn Kathir in his *Exegesis* [4/226] and he ascribed it to Ibn Abu Hatim.

وَلَقَدْ سَبَقَتْ كَلِمَتُنَا لِعِبَادِنَا الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٧١﴾ إِنَّهُمْ لَهُمُ الْمَنْصُورُونَ ﴿١٧٢﴾
وَلَإِنْ جُنَدْنَا لَهُمُ الْعَالِيُونَ ﴿١٧٣﴾

Our word has already been given to Our servants the messengers [171] it is they who will be helped [172] and the ones who support Our cause will be the winners [173] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 171-173)

The Quranic phrase, ‘...Our Word has already gone forth (*sabaqat kalimatuna*)...’ (*as-Saffat*: 171) means that Allah *Glorified is He* decreed these things before the universe existed. There are a few phrases that are synonymous to this one; one could say *sabaqat kalimatuna*, *waqaat kalimatuna* or *haqqat kalimatuna*. *Sabaqat* means the matter was delineated before it happened; *waqaat* (meaning ‘it happened’) relates to the time of its occurrence, while *haqqat* means that it is Allah's sole right to judge in accordance with His Power, and it is absolutely true that His judgment shall occur according to His Will. Thus, these meanings come together and complete each other.

Now, what is this ‘Word’ that has gone forth from Allah *Glorified is He* to His Messengers? It is the Quranic verses: ‘Most surely they shall be the assisted ones, and most surely Our host alone shall be the victorious ones.’ (*as-Saffat*: 172-173)

These two points that the messengers will inevitably be supported and that the hosts will undoubtedly be victorious refer to the ‘Word that has gone forth’ and the decree that cannot be repealed.

On account of this, Muslim scholars have inferred from these verses that for an army to earn victory certain prerequisites need to be fulfilled, but when neglected, defeat will surely happen.

Looking at the outcome of a conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims, it can be found that when Muslims were victorious, they were fulfilling these prerequisites, but when they were defeated, it was due to failure to meet such conditions, and they should have turned to themselves and search for

the cause of their shortcoming. Had they maintained such prerequisites, Allah *Glorified is He* would have delivered His promise of victory to them.

This matter can be clearly inferred from the battles of Badr and Uhud. In the Battle of Badr, Muslims were victorious because they did not break the laws set by Allah *the Most High* relating to attaining victory. In the Battle of Uhud, however, they were not victorious even though they had Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in their midst. This was natural and should not come as a surprise. They disobeyed the command of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so how could they be granted victory despite their disobedience? I swear by Allah, had He given them victory on that occasion, the command of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would have become negligible in their eyes. They would have said, 'On such-and-such a day, we were disobedient but were still victorious.' Consequently, the final result of the Battle of Uhud was the defeat of the failed Muslims, whereas Islam was victorious and its laws and principles were held high.

As for the messengers, they have full trust in Allah's promise of victory. To them, this matter is not open to discussion. This is proven in the story of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. When he, along with the children of Israel, left Egypt, Pharaoh and his troops followed them until they almost caught up with Musa (Moses) and his people at the edge of the sea. Thereupon, Prophet Musa's (Moses') people said that they were most surely being overtaken. (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 61) In response, Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said: '... By no means, surely my Lord is with me. He will show me a way out.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 62) He said it with full confidence, denying an event that seemed but a moment away; the sea was in front of them and the enemy was behind them, yet he said, '...By no means, surely my Lord is with me. He will show me a way out.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 62) This is out of full belief in Allah's statement: 'Most surely they shall be the assisted ones' (*as-Saffat*: 172).

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

﴿١٧٥﴾
﴿١٧٤﴾
﴿١٧٦﴾
﴿١٧٧﴾

**So [Prophet] turn away from the disbelievers for a while [174]
 a Watch them: they will soon see [175] Do they really wish to
 hasten Our punishment? [176] When it descends on their
 courtyards, how terrible that morning will be for those who
 were warned! [177] (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 174 - 177)**

Allah's saying, 'Therefore, turn away from them...' (*as-Saffat*: 174) means leave them to their falsehood and turn aside from them. Why should that be the case, when Allah *the Exalted* is able to aid His religion from the very beginning? Muslim scholars maintain that it is because Allah wants falsehood to worsen, prevailing until people feel constricted and tormented by it and, therefore, come to hate it. Another reason is to train the people of truth to overcome trials and tribulations so they may get stronger in their belief.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And [then] see them, so they too shall see' (*as-Saffat*: 175); this verse is an order to Prophet Muhammad to look at their state and their eventual outcome. They will also come to see this outcome as well as the punishments they hasten that will befall them: 'What! Would they then hasten on Our chastisement?' (*as-Saffat*: 176) In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* states that the disbelievers used to say to their Prophets: '... bring us what you promise us, if you should be of the truthful.' (*al-Ahqaf*: 22) This is idiocy on their part, for this punishment that they deny and seek to hasten is going to happen inevitably: 'But when it shall descend in their court (*fa idha nazal bi sahatihim*), evil shall then be the morning of the warned ones.' (*as-Saffat*: 177) The Arabic word *saha* (court) refers to a wide-open place or the space that people seek for fresh air. The word *nazal* in this verse also means 'comes upon them and surprises them'.

Allah's saying, '... evil shall then be the morning of the warned ones', means their awakening (*sabah*) will be horrific and evil. Morning (*As-Subh*) is the best time for battle so that one might surprise the enemy before it is prepared. Alternatively, it could refer to the punishment coming on them all

of a sudden in broad daylight, such that they are unable to hide their disgrace. The word *mundharin* in this verse alludes to those whom Allah has admonished and warned.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

وَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿١٧٨﴾ وَأَبْصِرْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٧٩﴾




**[Prophet], turn away from the disbelievers for a
while [178] Watch them: they will soon see [179]
(The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 178 - 179)**

The earlier verse in which Allah *Glorified is He* states, ‘Therefore turn away from them till a time,’ (*as-Saffat*: 174) refers to turning aside from them in this worldly life. Similarly, the Quranic verse, ‘and [then] see them ...’ (*as-Saffat*: 175) has also to do with seeing in this world and so does the verse: ‘... for they too shall see.’ (*as-Saffat*: 175)

‘Time’ as mentioned in the verse, may signify punishment in this world or in the Hereafter, as can be inferred from the verse, ‘... So should We make you see part of what We threaten them with ...’ which means in this world, ‘... or should We cause you to die, to Us shall they be returned’ (*Ghafir*: 77) which means in the Hereafter.

However, ‘time’ mentioned in this verse, ‘And turn away from them till a time’ (*as-Saffat*: 178) refers to the Hereafter, for it is not a repetition of the previous verse. The same is the case with the verse, ‘and [then] see, for they too shall see,’ (*as-Saffat*: 179) which alludes to the punishment, overtaking them all of a sudden in the Hereafter, that they once denied and rejected, and they will then say, ‘Our Lord! We have seen and we have heard’ (*as-Sajda*: 12).

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* states:


 سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ 
 وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ
 وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ 

**Your Lord, the Lord of Glory, is far above what they
 attribute to Him [180] Peace be upon the messengers [181]
 and praise be to God the Lord of all the Worlds [182]
 (The Quran, *as-Saffat*: 180 - 182)**

Allah *the Almighty* concludes this chapter with a glorification confirming His transcendence and affirming His attributes and actions to be beyond similarity and similitude. People's attributes and actions are totally different from those of Allah *the Almighty*; we should understand the Divine Attributes and Actions in the light of His saying, '...there is nothing like unto Him...' (*ash-Shura*: 11).

The meaning of the verse, 'Glory be to your Lord ...' (*as-Saffat*: 180) is that Allah is transcendent above and beyond any shortcoming or any similarity to creation. Creation comprises essences *dhawat*, but they are not like unto Allah's Essence/*dhat*. They exist but their existence is not like unto His. They have independence, but it is not like His independence; they have wisdom but not like unto His, etc.

In the Quranic phrase, '... the Lord of Honour' (*as-Saffat*: 180), the word 'Lord' *Rabb* signifies nurture *tarbiyya* and implies nurturing the one being nourished in order to successfully achieve the goal appointed to him. To prepare the one being nourished, one doing the nourishing needs to first know the end for which this one being nourished is created. Subsequently, one doing the nourishing must have the wisdom to lay out the way which enables the one being nourished to attain that end.

So, who determines the end of man's existence? As previously stated, the manufacturer of something is the one who determines the purpose of its creation first and foremost, even before he embarks upon it. Did the inventor of the television set, for example, invent it and then say, 'It is for you to find out the uses of this set?' Of course not, he defined the purpose of manufacturing it first. Similarly, none but Allah, the Creator of man, is to determine the purpose of man's creation. Furthermore, products are maintained by their manufacturers, and so is man's behaviour which cannot be reformed except with Allah's Guidance.

This is why we assert that this world only becomes corrupt when man leaves this framework, starts to set for himself the purpose of his existence, lays down his own guidance for life and puts his Creator and His Guidance aside. The path that the Creator has laid down for his created beings is akin to a manual, by means of which a product is maintained and any arising damage can be rectified. The one who lays down such a manual must necessarily be precise and wise so that nothing escapes him, and nothing needs to be changed or corrected. The Creator *Glorified is He* is more knowledgeable about His slaves and His creation, and He knows better what is best for them in this world and the Hereafter: ‘Does He not know, Who created? And He is the Knower of the subtleties, the Aware.’ (*al-Mulk*: 14)

If this were not the case, why would the Creator invite us to come to Him five times through prayer during the day and the night and make the prayers obligatory upon us under all circumstances? This is why *Salat Al-Safar* (travel prayer) and *Salat Al-Marid* (the sick prayer) have been legislated. Even if one’s illness is severe, he must pray, even with his glance or thoughts.

As already stated in this regard, when one desires to see the president or some dignitary, then one must get an appointment and follow certain procedures. Furthermore, the issue to be discussed shall be specified, and then it is that dignitary who ends the meeting at his own will. As for meeting with your Lord, it is a meeting of a beloved who allows His admirer to specify the time, place and subject of the meeting. He may begin and ends it whenever he likes. If you want to meet your Lord, you only need to get prepared for it and say *Allah akbar* (Allah is the Greatest), a phrase that brings you directly into the presence of your Lord *Glorified is He*.

Imagine that a product is checked by its manufacturer five times a day, could there remain any problems or defects with it?! For this reason, whenever Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* found himself troubled by some matter, he would rush to pray. He *peace and blessings be upon him* would also say, ‘Give us rest by it (i.e. prayer), O, Bilal.’⁽¹⁾ Indeed, give us rest by it, not from it!

(1) This was narrated by the Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his *Musnad* [5/364] and Abu Dawud in his *Sunnan* [4985] on the authority of a man from amongst the Companions.

At the end of this chapter, Allah *the Exalted* mentions His glorification, then His Lordship with which He nurtures and prepares one for the task assigned to him. Nonetheless, why do you need such nurture? You need it so that you may be honoured by Allah: '... the Lord of Honour (*Al-izza*)...' (*as-Saffat*: 180). *Al-izza* (honour, power, and glory) implies defeating others but not getting defeated by anyone.

Thus, we set forth the parable, and indeed Allah is beyond all similitudes; for example, when a small boy goes out in the street alone, other boys may wind him up, pick a fight with him or beat him. If, however, his father takes him by the hand and goes out with him, no one will dare approach him out of fear of his father. Likewise, a Muslim should always put himself in the care of his Lord and be with Him, for only then no one will dare to offend him.

Hence, the *izza* (honour) is one of Allah's Attributes, by virtue of which He *the Most High* bestows upon His slaves the victory that cannot be suppressed, along with the power that renders one in no need of others. Another type of *izza* (honour) is pride in sin, of which Allah says: 'and when it is said to him to guard against (the punishment of) Allah, pride carries him off to sin. Therefore, hell is sufficient for him, and certainly, it is an evil resting place.' (*al-Baqara*: 206) This type of '*izza* (honour) represents baseless arrogance.

Another example of this type is the statement of the hypocrites, as mentioned in the Quranic verse: '...If we return to Medina, the more honoured (*Al-a'azz*) will surely drive out the meaner therefrom ...' (*al-Munafiqun*: 8). Indeed, they spoke the truth, but who was really the 'the more honoured' and who was the 'meaner'?

The Quranic verse, '... above what they describe' (*as-Saffat*: 180) refers to Allah's transcendence above their lies and attributions. Allah says: 'and peace be on the prophets' (*as-Saffat*: 181); this means on all of them because despite the fact that sometimes they burdened us with difficult things, they took us by the hand to safety and success. Thus, we ask Allah to grant them peace and to confer His blessings upon them whenever they are mentioned.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'and all praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.' (*as-Saffat*: 182), for He is the One Who guided and helped us to

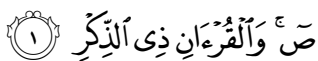
follow the right path through His messengers. All praise is also due to Allah *the Almighty* for the reward, bliss, and gardens that He has prepared for us in the next world. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... and the last of their calls shall be, "Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds."' (*Yunus*: 10) It is narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Whoever wants to be given the fullest measure of reward on the Day of Judgment should finish his gatherings by saying, "Glory be to your Lord, the Lord of Honour, above what they describe and peace be on the prophets, and all praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. (182)'" (*as-Saffat*: 181-182)

the chapter of

Sad

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

The chapter of *Sad*⁽²⁾:



***Sad*, By the Quran with its reminding [1]
(The Quran, *Sad*: 1)**

We have previously discussed the disjoined letters (*Al-huruf Al-muqattaa*) in the beginnings of Quranic chapters. We clarified that Allah *Glorified is He* opens some chapters with a single disconnected letter like *sad*, *nun* and *qaf*, others with two letters like *ta sin* and *ha mim*, others with four letters like *alif lam mim sad* and yet others with five letters like *kaf ha ya'ayn sad* and *ha mim ayn sin qaf*.

We also explained that letters are of two types, one of which is those that are components of words. The component letters are those from which words are formed. For instance, the verb *Katab* (he wrote) is composed of the letters:

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- (1) The Islamic conception of 'Allah' is not the same as the Christian and Jewish conception of 'God'. However, the word 'Allah' does not refer to a tribal god or God of only Muslims, it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use 'Allah' rather than 'God' as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.
 - (2) The chapter of *Sad* is Meccan according to the consensus of the scholars. It contains 88 verses, and it is the 38th chapter according to the order of the *Mushaf* and is located in the 23rd *juz'* (1/30 parts of the Quran). It was revealed after chapter *al-Qamar* and before chapter *al-A'raf* and thereby it was the 37th chapter to be revealed. See *Al-Itqan fi Ulum Al-Quran* 1/27.

kaf, *ta* and *ba*. The letter *kaf* or *ta* on its own has no meaning. The second type of letters is the ones which have meaning in themselves such as the letter *ta* that is added to the end of a verb and acts as its subject. In the verb *katabtu* (I wrote), *ta* refers to a first person subject 'I', whereas in *katabta* (you wrote), it refers to a second person subject 'you', and in *katabti* (you wrote), it refers to a female in the second person.

We also mentioned that there are 28 letters in the Arabic alphabet, 14 of which appear at the beginning of some chapters. The best viewpoint in this regard is that such letters constitute the fabric of the Quranic words and the bricks of its construction. Even though the Arabs know and speak these letters, they are incapable of imitating the Quran or producing the like of it despite the fact that language was their skill, forte and genius. The letters are the same letters and so are the words, but as the Quran is the word of Allah, they necessarily fell short.

The Quranic verse: '*Sad*. I swear by the Quran, full *Dhi Adh-Dhikr* (of admonition).' (*Sad*: 1) is an indication of inimitability and its aspect. The letter *Sad* is one of the letters used in the Quran. The Quran is miraculous because the Arabs failed to produce the like of it, not even a single verse like its verses in spite of being the nation of rhetoric and eloquence. They were the only nation to hold open forums and markets for language and oratory such as that of 'Ukazh, Al-Mirbad and Dhi Al-Majanna. Their reverence for speech and eloquence was such that they hung the best pieces on the walls of the *Ka'ba*. Accordingly, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was supported by a miracle of the same nature at which his people excelled.

The intended meaning here is that the letter *Sad*, mentioned in the verse in question, is one of their alphabets.⁽¹⁾ Then Allah says, '...I swear by the Quran...' (*Sad*: 1). This means the Quran which they were incapable of imitating. Being

(1) Some scholars attempted to interpret the word *Sad*. Ad-Dahhak said that it means, 'Allah spoke the truth (*sadaqa Allah*), that it is an oath which Allah swore and that it is one of His Names. Muhammad ibn Ka'b Al-Qurazi said it is the opening letter of Allah's Names. Samad, Sani' Al-masnua't, Sadiq Al-wa'd and Qatada said it is one of the names of the Quran. Al-Qurtubi mentioned these views in his exegesis [8/5784] and then said, 'And it is argued that the interpretation of such letters is only known by Allah alone.'

written, the Quran is sometimes referred to as ‘the Book’, and it is sometimes referred to as ‘the Quran’ (the Recital) because it is recited. It is written down in books, recited, and memorised.

The Quranic phrase, ‘...(dhi adh-dhikr) full of admonition’ (*Sad*: 1) signifies the reminder the Quran contains. The word *adh-dhikr* (admonition) may allude to many things just as the Arabic word ‘*ayn* refers to a spring of water, an eye, silver and gold, a spy or a distinguished person. It is left then to the listener’s intelligence and the context to determine the meaning. These meanings have a common name combining them, and this is one of the merits of languages.

In the same way, the word *An-najm* may refer to a star in the sky or a plant that has no stalk. An example of this is the Quranic verse: ‘And *An-Najm* (the herbs) and the trees prostrate.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 6) It is also used in this sense by a poet:

In my travels toward you, the najm (star) I heed,
In the desert upon it grazes my steed.

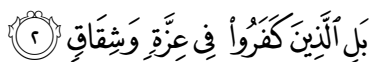
The word *Adh-dhikr* may refer to the Noble Quran as in the verse: ‘And they say: "O, you to whom the Reminder (*Adh-dhikr*) has been revealed! You are most surely insane!"’ (*al-Hijr*: 6) The word *Adh-dhikr* may also refer to the Scriptures of previous messengers as in the Quranic verse: ‘so ask the people of the [earlier] Message [*ahl adh-dhikr*] if you do not know’ (*an-Nahl*: 43).

It may also signify reputation and prestige, as in the verse: ‘and verily, this [the Quran] is indeed a Reminder (*dhikr*) for you and your people, and you all will be questioned.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 44) This meaning is also used in the verse: ‘We have certainly sent down to you a Book in which is your mention (*fih dhikrukum*)...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 10). The Arabs and their language would never have come into prominence had their language not been that of the Quran.

The word *Adh-dhikr* is also used to refer to remembrance as in the Quranic verse, ‘... But Satan caused him to forget to mention [Yusuf (Joseph)] to his lord ...’ (*Yusuf*: 42), and it is also used to the glorification of Allah as in the verse: ‘...there glorify Him therein in the mornings and the evenings. Men whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of Allah...’ (*an-Nur*: 36-37).

The word *Adh-dhikr* may also denote another meaning: a handsome gift from Allah *the Most High* or an act of obedience by a worshipper to Him. Hence, the word *Adh-dhikr* in the Quran resembles a diamond glittering in one's hand; each way you turn it, it sparkles. All of such meanings apply to the verse: '*Sad*. I swear by the Quran, full of admonition.' (*Sad*: 1)

Allah *Glorified is He* states:



**Yet the disbelievers are steeped in arrogance
and hostility [2] (The Quran, *Sad*: 2)**

It is known that the Arabic article *bal* (but nay) is used for negation of what precedes it and affirming what follows it. In this verse, *bal* affirms that disbelievers are lost in false pride and opposition, but what is the preceding sentence that it negates? It is preceded by the verse: '*Sad*. I swear by the Quran, full of admonition.' (*Sad*: 1) The Quran is the miracle of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and they were required to believe in and be content with it, but they disbelieved. The meaning is thus, 'but nay, the disbelievers rejected it, indeed they were in self-exaltation and opposition.'

Some scholars are under the opinion that the verse, '*Sad*. I swear by the Quran, full of admonition' (*Sad*: 1) is an oath, the complement of which comes at the end of this chapter in the verse: 'that most surely is the truth: the contending one with another of the inmates of the fire.' (*Sad*: 64) Though, it is not correct to infer an oath and then search for an appropriate complement for it.

The words, '(*fi izza*) in self-exaltation ...' (*Sad*: 2) refer to sinful pride, namely arrogance and wilful rejection of the truth. This is a baseless pride: '...and opposition (*shiqaq*).' The word *shiqaq* is derived from the root word *shiqq* which signifies a barrier between two things. There are many ways of expressing this meaning in the Arabic language. We can say, '*hadha fi shiqq wa hadha fi shiqq*' which means 'these two things do not come together'. It is similar to the word *adw* (enemy) because two enemies do not proceed to come together. The origin of the word *adw* developed from the Arabic language and environment where there were many valleys. A valley has two ends, and

each end is called an *udwa*. An example of the usage of this origin is the Quranic verse: '[Remember that day] when you were at the near end⁽¹⁾ of the valley [of Badr], and they were at its farthest end...' (*al-Anfal*: 42); thus, the word *adw* is derived from the word *udwa* meaning that each one is off in his own direction. Similar to this is the word *janib* (to put to one side) and also the word *hadd*, as mentioned in the verse: 'Verily, those who contend (*yuhaddun*) against Allah and His Messenger...' (*al-Mujadala*: 5). Furthermore, another example of this is the word *inharaf* (to deviate) meaning one went to one edge (*harf*), and the other went to another, i.e. one went to an extreme, and the other went to another extreme. This is clear in the verse: 'and amongst mankind is he who worships Allah as it were, upon the very edge (i.e. in doubt) (*harf*)...' (*al-Hajj*: 11). All such words refer to a lack of union as stated in the verse under discussion: 'Nay! Those who disbelieve are in self-exaltation and opposition.' (*Sad*: 2) Their pride is false and sinful. The word *shiqaq* means 'dissention that is unlikely to be resolved'. The intended meaning of the verse, however, is that they failed to take heed of what happened between previous nations and their prophets. For this reason, it is not intended that the Quran narrates to them the events of history in the verse: '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) Rather, it is only to remind them of those incidents of which they are heedless.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ فَنَادَواْ وَلَآتٍ حِينَ مَنَاصٍ ﴿٣﴾

How many generations We have destroyed before them!

They all cried out, once it was too late, for escape [3]

(The Quran, *Sad*: 3)

The word *kam* (how many) at the beginning of this verse is predicative and thus indicates a large number. It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* left it up to

(1) *Al-Udwa* means a side or direction. Al-Farra said, '*Al-udwa* means the end of the valley, the near end being closer to Medina and the far end being closer to Mecca.' See *Lisan Al-'Arab*, the root word (*ada*).

the listener to imagine the number and define the amount. One does not use such an expression unless he is certain of how great the number involved is. One may, for instance, say to another who has denied his favours, 'How much I have given you!' or 'How patient I have been with you!' meaning a great many times.

The word *qarn* means a generation or a period of time characterised by a single factor such as prophethood or something else, as we find, for instance, in the phrase, 'the people of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*', or 'the people of Hud *peace be upon him*'. The word *qarn* may also be used to signify a century, and it is named as such because its years are relatively close together (*mutaqarina*).

Allah's saying, '... before them ...' (*Sad*: 3) is wonderfully precise because after the coming of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Allah did not destroy a group of people entirely as He did before his coming. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* addressing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says: 'But Allah was not going to chastise them while you were amongst them...' (*al-Anfal*: 33). Thus, Allah's saying, '...before them...' (*Sad*: 3) means that this issue happened formerly and will not be repeated in the ummah of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. We find a similar example of this in the Quranic verse: '...Why, then, did you kill Allah's prophets before...?' (*al-Baqara*: 91) Had Allah *the Almighty* not said, 'before them', Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would have thought that his people would plan to kill him as previous prophets were killed, but Allah *Glorified is He* reassured his heart saying: '...before...' (*al-Baqara*: 91); this means that he should be reassured, for this will not happen again. In this way, Allah *Glorified is He* strengthens the heart of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

The Quranic verse, '...then they cried...' (*Sad*: 3) suggests that when the punishment was inflicted upon them and their general destruction was at hand, they called out to anyone who might hear them to save and rescue them. Yet, whom were they calling? The Quran does not specify whom they were calling to show the state of terror overwhelming them. Calling out in desperation for help has degrees which differ according to the level of danger. If someone throws a stone at you, for instance, you will react internally; you will seek help from yourself, thereby raising your hand or your foot, for example, to ward off the harm.

If the danger is beyond your capacity such that you cannot repel it yourself, you call out to the nearest person to you: your father, mother, brother, neighbour, someone passing by in the street, etc. If none of them can help you, you cry out (*ya huwa*) which means ‘O, Allah, I have none but You to turn to and call upon.’

When the disbelievers were overwhelmed by destruction, they cried at the top of their lungs to whoever could save or rescue them, but that was impossible, for who is it that could save them from Allah’s punishment?! So their calls were of no avail. The word *lat* in the verse, ‘...then they cried while the time of escaping had passed them by’ (*Sad*: 3) is composed of two letters: *la* (no) used for negation and the letter *ta* which is added to the end. The letter *la* denotes negation generally; it, however, may be used to negate something situated somewhere as in the saying, *la rajul fi ad-dar* (there is no man in the house), and it may negate the place itself as in the saying, *la dar askunuha* (I have no house to live in). If the letter *ta* is added to it, it negates time specifically and therefore it is followed by the word *hin* meaning ‘time’. Similar to it are the words *thamma* and *thummat* (both mean ‘then’), as one poet⁽¹⁾ said,

Then we rose to our steeds, blazed,

 Their manes kerchiefs unto our hands⁽²⁾

The word (*manas*) means a retreat or an escape. Thus, the meaning of *wa lat hin manas* is ‘and this was not the time for retreating or escaping’.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

(1) The name of the poet is Abda ibn Yazid At-Tabib, from the tribe of Tamim. He is one of the poets who spanned the period before and after the coming of Islam. He was black and very courageous. He took part in numerous battles including fighting against the Persians with Al-Muthanna ibn Haritha. He passed away in the year 25 AH. He composed 18 poems totalling 156 couplets.

(2) This couplet is cited from a poem of 81 lines, based on the extended metre (*Al-basit*), the first of which is:

Is the bond of Khawla still tied aft her exit,

 Or do you live distant, from her distracted

وَعَجِبُوا أَنْ جَاءَهُمْ مُنذِرٌ مِنْهُمْ وَقَالَ الْكَافِرُونَ هَذَا سَاحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ
أَجْعَلِ الْآلِهَةَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عُجَابٌ

The disbelievers think it strange that a prophet of their own people has come to warn them: they say, 'He is just a lying sorcerer [4] How can he claim that all the gods are but one God? What an astonishing thing [to claim]! [5] (The Quran, *Sad*: 4-5)

What in fact is stranger is their surprise. They deem it strange, when their situation is actually more astonishing. They are surprised that, '...there has come to them a warner from st themselves, and the disbelievers say, "This is an enchanter, a liar." (*Sad*: 4) Yet, what causes real surprise is to send down to them a messenger of some other species. This is why Allah *the Most High* says in another verse: 'And nothing prevented people from believing when the guidance came to them except that they said, "What! Has Allah raised up a mortal to be a messenger?"' (*al-Isra*': 94)

They wanted an angel to be their messenger. Had an angel come to them, it would have come in the form of a man, and had it proceeded as such, the doubt would still remain. In response, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Say: "Had there been in the earth angels walking about as settlers, We would certainly have sent down to them from the heaven an angel as a messenger." (*al-Isra*': 95) Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'And if We had made him angel, We would certainly have made him a man, and We would certainly have caused confusion to them what they had confused.' (*al-An'am*: 9)

As such, a messenger must be of the same nature as those to whom he is sent, for he carries guidance which he himself is to implement, in addition to being an example and a role model for his people. How could human beings follow in the footsteps of an angel? Surely, had an angel come to them, they would have turned away arguing that angels are infallible and capable of things they cannot afford. Furthermore, they would have said that angels do not have any passions or lusts as we do, etc.

Thus, what is strange is that they should be surprised that a messenger is one amongst their own kind. The fact that a messenger is one of their own

kind represents a part of the evidence against them. In addition, it is only in this way that a messenger can act as a role model for people. Reminding the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of His favours, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Indeed, there has come unto you [O, mankind] a messenger from amongst yourselves ...' (*at-Tawba*: 128); this means of your own kind, not a stranger. This is a merit for you and your wonder is out of place.

Not only is he of their own kind, namely mankind, but he is also of the same race, namely an Arab. Furthermore, he is from a noble Arab tribe, Quraysh. They knew his lineage and knew his morals even before he was sent as a messenger to them. Hence, Allah *the Exalted* refutes their ideas by saying: 'and when Our clear communications are recited to them, those who hope not for Our meeting say, "Bring a Quran other than this or change it." Say: "It does not beseem me that I should change it of myself. I follow naught but what is revealed to me. Surely, I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the punishment of a mighty day." Say: "If Allah had desired [otherwise], I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have taught it to you. Indeed, I have lived a lifetime amongst you before it. Do you not then understand?"' (*Yunus*: 15-16)

Undoubtedly, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* lived amongst his people for 40 years before his mission, and they knew everything about him. In this way, it is the other way round of what they deem strange which is surprising.

Mentioning what they used to say, Allah *Glorified is He* states: '...and the disbelievers say, "This is an enchanter, a liar."' (*Sad*: 4) The word *sahir* (enchanter) signifies someone who conjures up illusions in order to deceive people into seeing things in other than their true reality, in spite of not changing their reality. *Sihr* (magic) does not affect the reality of things. It only affects people's eyes as stated in the verse: '... they deceived the people's eyes...' (*al-A'raf*: 116).

It should be noted that there is a difference between magic and the miracle of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. His miracle resembled magic because he was challenged by magicians. When Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* threw down his staff and the magicians saw it devouring their magic, they said, 'We believe in The Lord of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*'

because they knew for certain that what Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* did was not magic. This is because they knew magic and the tricks of magicians well and what Musa (Moses) did was not of such kind.

They saw the staff turning into a snake and swallowing up their trickery, for magicians can see things as they really are. They see the ropes as ropes even when people see them as snakes moving and writhing. On this basis, the magicians knew that what Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* did in front of them was not magic.

In reply to those who accused Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of being a magician, we would say that if we granted that such had been the case, and he would have enchanted those who believed in him; how was it then that you remained disbelievers? Why did he not put a spell on you as he did with those who believed in him and thereby calling a halt to your enmity and disbelief?

Then, they say, as stated in the verse: 'What! He makes the gods a single deity [Allah]? A strange thing is this, to be sure!' (*Sad*: 5) They found it strange and rejected the call of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to Divine unity; namely to the worship of Allah alone without associates. They used to worship many gods, and therefore, there were many idols around the *Ka'ba*. There were those amongst them who worshipped the sun, the moon, the planets, the stars, the angels, etc. However, why did they have this misconception? It arose from their belief in the immensity and greatness of the universe. It is such a perfect and wondrous universe that has the earth with its rivers, mountains, fields, fruits, and its heavens with their stars, constellations, the sun, the moon, the planets, etc. From their perspective, this vast universe is too much to be created by a lone individual; there must surely have been many who shared in its creation.

It was the greatness of the universe which led them to believe in many gods, but we maintain that the reverse is true in this regard. The perfection and magnificence of the creation prove that there must be a Creator Who is the One and only. Had there been many creators, the universe could not have been in such order and harmony. Had there been many creators, it would have been as Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies in the verse: '... [If there

had been], then each deity would surely have stood apart [from the others] in whatever it had created, and they would surely have [tried to] overcome one another ...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 91).

Their argument, as stated in the Quran, 'What! He makes the gods a single deity [Allah]?' (*Sad*: 5) is fallacious in two ways: First, their assumption that the immensity of a creation is proof of its having many creators, while it is in fact a proof that there is only one creator; Second, they state that there are many gods. Yet, the very existence of a god means that He is worshipped and obeyed in its commandments and prohibitions. So tell us, what have these gods ordered you to do and from what have they prohibited you? What have they prepared for those who obey them of reward and what they have prepared for those who disobey them?

In effect, your attributing divinity to such gods is a lie. It is vain talk for which Allah has given no authority. Had, you, disbelievers, understood the meaning of the word 'god', the meaning of 'worship' and that the one being worshipped must have guidance for his worshippers to follow, you would not have advocated a multiplicity of gods.

For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* sets forth a parable for them by saying: 'Allah sets forth an example. There is a slave belonging to several partners contending with one another, and there is another slave wholly owned by one man. Are the two alike in condition? ...' (*az-Zumar*: 29) That is to say, does the one who is a slave to one master render the same level of service as one who serves several masters? Would that they are agreed, but they are at loggerheads, differing amongst themselves. Similarly, the one who worships Allah *Glorified is He* alone and the one who worships many gods are not the same.

It can be observed that in the Quranic verse: '... A strange thing is this, to be sure,' (*Sad*: 5); the word '*ujab* (strange) is used, whereas the word '*ajibu* (they wonder) is employed in the previous verse: 'And they wonder...' (*Sad*: 4). The word '*ajibu* is derived from the verb '*ajab*, the verbal noun of which is '*ajaba*, whereas the word '*ujab* denotes an exaggerated form used to emphasise amazement and wonder. The root letters of the verbal noun constitute the word in addition to the extra letters which indicate the emphatic form, in

the same manner as we say, *tawil* (tall) and *tuwal* (extremely tall) or (*gharib*) (strange) and *ghurab* (extremely strange).⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* states:

وَأَنْطَلَقَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْهُمْ أَنْ آمْسُوا وَاصْبِرُوا عَلَىٰ إِلَهِتِكُمْ إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ يُرَادُ ﴿٦﴾
مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي الْمِلَّةِ الْآخِرَةِ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا خُلُقٌ ﴿٧﴾

Their leaders depart, saying, ‘Walk away! Stay faithful to your gods! That is what you must do [6] We did not hear any such claim in the last religion: it is all an invention [7] (The Quran, *Sad*: 6 - 7)

The word *mala* (the chief persons) refers to awe-inspiring, neat, and well-dressed people, who take the forefront during gatherings. The chief persons, as mentioned in the verse, allude to the leaders and the prominent disbelievers of Quraysh, at the head of which were Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira, Abu Jahl, Ubayy ibn Khalaf, Umayya ibn Khalaf, Utba ibn Rabia, his brother Shayba and An-Nadr ibn Al-Harith. Allah *the Almighty* specifically mentioned those chiefs because they were the leaders and the call of Prophet Muhammad

(1) The occasion of the revelation of these verses is mentioned by Al-Wahidi in *Asbab An-Nuzul* [p. 209]. He says, ‘The scholars say that when ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab embraced Islam, the believers rejoiced, but it was unbearable for the Quraysh. Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira told the leaders and notables of Quraysh, ‘Go to Abu Taleb.’ So, they went to him and said, ‘You are our elder and chief. You know what these fools are doing. We have come to you so that you might arbitrate between us and your nephew.’ He sent for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and invited him to talk. He said, ‘O, my nephew, your people have a question to ask you, so do not be too hard on them.’ He *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, ‘And what do they ask?’ Abu Taleb said, ‘They said, “Leave us alone and leave our gods alone and we will leave you and your god alone.”’ To that, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Will you give me one word, by which you will rule the Arabs and the non-Arabs will yield before you?’ To which Abu Jahl replied, ‘By Allah! We will give it you and ten more like it.’ Thereupon, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Say, “There is none worthy of worship except Allah.”’ They were repulsed by that, stood up and said, ‘What! He makes the gods a single deity [Allah]? ... (*Sad*: 5). ‘How could one god encompass the entire creation?’ Then, on this incident, Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the verse: ‘The people of Nuh (Noah) and Ad, and Fir’on (Pharaoh), the lord of spikes, rejected (messengers) before them.’ (*Sad*: 12)

peace and blessings be upon him would pull the rug from under their feet. Thus, it was they who stood to lose out because of his call.

A story is related in this regard. These leaders went to Abu Taleb, uncle of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said to him, 'If your nephew wants dominion, we will make him our king. If he wants wealth, we will gather wealth for him until he becomes the richest of us ...', and so they continued. So, Abu Taleb spoke to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'O my nephew, spare yourself and spare me. Do not put a greater burden on me than I can bear. Your people came to me and said such-and-such.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied with his famous answer, 'By Allah, O, my uncle, were they to put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left on condition that I leave this matter, I would not leave it until Allah manifests it or I perish beforehand.'⁽¹⁾


When their efforts came to nothing and they realised that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would not call a truce with them over their gods and that he would not accept their offers and bargaining, they hurried back to the people to urge them to stick fast to their gods and to be patient therein. Allah relates what they did: 'And the chief persons of them break forth by saying, "Go and steadily adhere to your gods..."' (*Sad*: 6). This means that those chief persons went to their people and urged them to keep worshipping their gods and to be careful so that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* should not lead them away from them.

They continued their statements: '...This is most surely a thing sought after (*shay' yurad*).'⁽²⁾ (*Sad*: 6) They told their people that this was something that had serious consequences and had been well thought out. If you disbelieved

(1) *Al-Bayhaqi narrates in Dala'il An-Nubuwwa [2/187] through the narration of Ibn Ishaq that Abu Taleb said to Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him 'O, my nephew, your people came to me and said that you harm them in their gathering place and their place of worship. Spare yourself and spare me. Do not impose on me a burden greater than what I can bear, neither can you. Waive for your people what they dislike of your speech.'* Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'O, my uncle, if the sun was placed in my right hand and the moon in my left, I would not leave this matter until Allah manifests it or I perish seeking it.' Abu Taleb could not but say, 'Keep going in your affair and do what you please, for by Allah, I will never turn away from you, come what may.'

in your gods, they would become angry with you and you would be afflicted with drought and famine. The Quranic phrase *shay' yurad* may suggest that they thought this was a plot against them as leaders so that they would become lowly after having been privileged, and they would be made equal with the rest of the people.

As for their statement, 'We never heard of this in the former faith...' (*Sad: 7*), it means 'we have not heard that Allah is just One.' The 'former faith' mentioned in this verse refers to the most recent of the faiths to Islam, namely Judaism and Christianity. Surely, Judaism and Christianity were originally revealed from heaven in a monotheistic form, but what encouraged the disbelievers to accuse them of polytheism was the claim of the Jews that Uzair (Ezra) *peace be upon him* was the son of God and the claim of the Christians that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was the Messiah, the son of God, and their claim that God was the third of three. Accordingly, the disbelievers of Mecca said that they had not heard of pure monotheism in the earlier faiths. '... This is nothing but a forgery' (*Sad: 7*) means that this is only fabrications and lies. The word *ikhtilaq* (forgery) refers to something invented with no basis in reality. Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* states:


 أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ مِنْ بَيْنِنَا بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِنْ ذِكْرِي بَلْ لَمَّا يَدْعُونَ عَذَابَ

**Was the message sent only to him out of all of us?
 In fact they doubt My warning; in fact they have not
 tasted My punishment yet [8] (The Quran, *Sad: 8*)**

This is another turn in their argument and denial of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Earlier, they were taking issue with the humanity of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and demanding that he should be an angel. In this stage, they have abandoned this stance and moved to a personal level. In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and they say, "Why was not this Quran revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?"' (*az-Zukhruf: 31*)

This means 'Why should it be Muhammad specifically, when we have great people and leaders amongst us who are more deserving of bearing this Message.' At this point, they say: 'Has the reminder been revealed to him

from amongst us? ...' (*Sad*: 8). Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* replies to them by saying: 'Will they distribute the Mercy of your Lord?...?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32) In this way, Allah *the Exalted* regards prophethood of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as a mercy to them. Allah says in another Quranic verse: '...We distribute amongst them their livelihood in the life of this world, and We have exalted some of them above others in degrees, that some of them may take others in subjection...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32).

In this verse, Allah says to them, 'How can you expect to have a say in a matter as important as this? Do you want to apportion Allah's Mercy? It is Allah Who has apportioned the lowly matters of this world amongst you and made some of you leaders and others slaves, some rich and some poor, etc. If it is Allah *Glorified is He* Who organises the simplest matters of your lives, how can you desire to apportion His Bounty and Mercy? Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... Allah knows best upon whom to bestow His Message...' (*al-An'am*: 124); this is Allah's bounty which He bestows upon whomsoever He wills.

The word *dhikr* (reminder) in the Quranic verse: 'Nay! They are in doubt as to My reminder...' (*Sad*: 8) refers to the Quran. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is consoling Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with this verse and putting his mind at ease, for He addresses him in another verse by saying: 'We know indeed that what they say certainly grieves you, but surely they do not call you a liar; however, the unjust deny the communications of Allah.' (*al-An'am*: 33) The meaning is thus: 'Do not be troubled, O, Muhammad, for it is not you that your people are denying, but it is what you have brought to them of this Reminder. You are considered by them to be truthful, trustworthy and beyond reproach. This matter has nothing to do with you and is not some personal matter; rather, it is about Me. This is to reassure, console and relieve the pain Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* suffered at the hands of his people.

Allah says: '... Nay! They have not yet tasted My chastisement!' (*Sad*: 8) This is a type of threat. It is to say: 'They will not remain in this state of safety and security. Indeed, their punishment is coming.' This is because the Arabic word *lamma* (not yet) denote a negation of an event in the past while affirming its occurrence in the future. When one says, '*fulan lam ya'ti*

(So-and-so did not come), it negates his coming in the past, but he may or may not come in the present or the future. However, when one says, *'fulan lamma ya'ti* (So-and-so has not come yet), it means that he did not come in the past, but he will come presently or in the future. Thus, the meaning of the verse '... Nay! They have not yet tasted My chastisement,' (*Sad*: 8) is 'until now Allah's punishment has not come to them, but it will inevitably come.'

أَمْرَعْنَهُمْ خَزَائِنُ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ الْعَزِيزِ الْوَهَّابِ ﴿٩﴾ أَمْ لَهُمْ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَلْيَرْتَقُوا فِي الْأَسْبَابِ ﴿١٠﴾ جُنْدٌ مَا هُنَالِكَ مَهْزُومٌ مِنَ الْأَحْزَابِ ﴿١١﴾

**Do they possess the treasures of your Lord's bounty, the
Mighty, the All-Giving? [9] Do they control the heavens and
earth and everything between? Let them climb their ropes[10]
their armed alliance is weak and will be crushed [11]
(The Quran, *Sad*: 9 - 11)**

Having negated their ability to apportion His Mercy, Allah, in this verse, negates that the keys to the treasures of His bounty are in their hands. The Arabic question word 'Am', translated as 'Do', clearly indicates their total inability to do any of the matters mentioned in the verse being discussed, which really means 'Do they distribute the Mercy of your Lord?! Or do they possess His bountiful treasures?! 'They have neither this nor that because prophethood is a mercy. The treasures of Mercy are only owned by Allah, the Giver and the Lord of Mercy. No one has any part in this because Allah *the Almighty* did not give the keys to His treasuries to anyone, even to the closest pious saints of Allah who were granted illuminating glimpses of the unseen to strengthen their certain footsteps on the Right Path. He only gives them what He wills from His bounty and any miracle for which they wish. However, the keys to His treasuries remain in His hand: 'He has the keys to the unseen; no one knows them but He...' (*al-An'am*: 59). Therefore, this verse ends with Allah's Names: '... the Almighty, the All-Giving' (*Sad*: 9). The Almighty is He Who always conquers and never overpowered in His affairs, or else, how could they take the treasuries of mercy from Him? He is also, '...The All-Giving' (*Sad*: 9), Who gives His generosity and magnanimity to any chosen person.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Do they control the heavens and earth and everything between? Let them climb their ropes’ (*Sad*: 10). This means that if they have dominion over the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, let them ascend into the heavens so that they might manage the affairs of creation. Allah *the Exalted* clarifies this matter in other verse: ‘Jinn and mankind, if you can pass beyond the regions of heaven and earth, then do so. You will not pass without Our authority’ (*ar-Rahman*: 33).

Hence, when man reached and walked on the surface of the moon, some of the philosophically inclined sophists said that he reached due to the power of knowledge, but how could this be whereas Allah *Glorified is He* says afterwards: ‘A flash of fire and smoke will be released upon you, and no one will come to your aid’ (*ar-Rahman*: 35). Thus, this refers to the Power of Allah, the Creator, Who grants and denies authority to and from whom He wills. Had this verse not been revealed, those who deny the night ascension of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would have been correct.

Allah’s saying, ‘Their armed alliance is weak and will be crushed’ (*Sad*: 11) refers to the disbelievers of Mecca who will be defeated whatever happens, just as their preceding deniers of the Messengers who were defeated.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* consoles Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by restating him how the previous nations denied their prophets. Thus, Allah *the Exalted* reminds Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he is not the first one who encountered this matter. Allah begins telling the story of the longest mission of Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*. Therefore, He *the Almighty* says:

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَعَادٌ وَفِرْعَوْنُ ذُو الْأَوْنَادِ ۖ وَثَمُودُ وَقَوْمُ لُوطٍ وَأَصْحَابُ لَيْكَةِ
أُولَئِكَ الْأَحْزَابُ ۚ إِن كُلُّ إِلَّا كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ عِقَابِ ۚ

The people of Noah, 'Ad, and firmly supported Pharaoh rejected their prophets before them [12] Thamud, the people of Lot, and the Forest-Dwellers each formed opposition [against theirs] [13] They all rejected the messengers and they were deservedly struck by My punishment [14] (The Quran, *Sad*: 12 - 14)

The phrase, ‘... The firmly supported’ (*Sad*: 12) either refers to things that are firmly fixed in the ground that are thought to be the pyramids, or it could

refer to poles with which he tortured his enemies. 'The Forest' refers to the garden with intertwining trees and entwined branches. 'The Forest-Dwellers' were the people of Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him*. '...each formed opposition [against theirs]' (*Sad*: 13) means that those mentioned disbelievers opposed, resisted and joined together against their messengers. 'They all rejected the messengers ...' (*Sad*: 14) which means that each of them denied his messenger. The phrase, '...and they were deservedly struck by My punishment' (*Sad*: 14) means that it became incumbent for them to be punished for their denial. Therefore, they should not be left without punishment for taking this stance against Prophet Muhammad. They could not evade Allah's punishment such as those who had been deservedly stricken by it.

وَمَا يَنْظُرُ هَؤُلَاءِ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً مَّا لَهَا مِنْ فَوَاقٍ ﴿١٥﴾

**All the disbelievers here are waiting for is
a single blast that cannot be postponed [15]
(The Quran, *Sad*: 15)**

The punishment of disbelievers is a trivial matter for Allah *the Exalted*; it will be just one blow on the Trumpet. The scholars conceive that this refers to the second blast on the Trumpet, upon which the creation will be resurrected. Allah's saying, '... that cannot be postponed' (*Sad*: 15) means that there will be no respite for them after it.

وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا عَجِّلْ لَنَا قِطْنَآ قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ ﴿١٦﴾

**They say, 'Our Lord! Advance us our share of
punishment before the Day of Reckoning!' [16]
(The Quran, *Sad*: 16)**

The phrase, '...our share of punishment...' (*Sad*: 16) means the share of the disbelievers from requital. The Arabic word *qittana* (punishment) is derived from *Al-qit'a*, the piece on which someone's requital is recorded. This means that they, admittedly being sinful, wish to have their share from punishment hastily in this life before the Day of Judgment. However, the punishment in this world is an insufficient requital for their disbelief because

it is as terminable as this world is. Yet, Allah postpones it until the Hereafter, the abode of eternity, the infinite residence. In fact, the blast will not be their punishment, but it is like the alarm announcing the advent of this Day.

Allah *Glorified is He* expounds upon this in His saying: ‘They also said, “Allah, if this really is the truth from You, then rain stones upon us from the heavens or send us some other painful punishment”’ (*al-Anfal*: 32). This is an evidence of their foolishness because there is no rational person who would ask Allah for such a strange request. Allah *the Almighty* shows that their stubborn refusal of the Message is against their own interest; instead of asking Allah for guidance, they say, ‘... “Then rain stones upon us from the heavens or send us some other painful punishment”’ (*al-Anfal*: 32).

Hence, Allah *the Almighty* expresses their incredulity at hastily asking of the punishment: ‘Do they really wish to hasten Our punishment? When it descends upon their courtyards, how terrible that morning will be for those who were warned! (*as-Saffat*: 176-177)

It is strange that the disbelievers of Mecca said, ‘Before the Day of Reckoning!’ (*Sad*: 16) Thus, this implies that they believe in this Day as they speak of it, acknowledging its existence to the extent that it is manifested in the lapses of their tongues. The scholars assume that this refers to the presence of a remaining pure natural disposition before having a devious mind. A disbeliever misuses his mind in denial, but he must still be aware, for his lies have no basis in reality. Accordingly, a liar often tells a lie on one day and then forgets and tells a contradictory one on the next. The speech of the truthful person does not change because he describes reality; however, a liar narrates the feigned non-existent things. Therefore, it is said, ‘If you are an accomplished liar, then have an excellent memory’; for example, a liar once unbearably said that he went out to the city on the night of *Eid Al-Fitr* (Lesser *Eid* which habitually comes at the beginning of *Shawwal*, the tenth lunar *Hijri* month), and the moon was high in the sky. How could this be? It is an inconsistent lie!

It is only the professional interrogator who is able to discriminate between truthful speech and false ones; the truthful person describes reality which is manifested, even if an interrogator asks him a thousand times, his speech will be consistent. However, a liar relates fantasies; his speech necessarily contradicts

itself, and his forgeries become apparent. As falsehood is the product of fictions and lies, so a person cannot precisely detect the lies as he is drawn into a web of tangled imaginary scenarios weaved by a liar.

Thus, their saying: 'Before the Day of Reckoning!' (*Sad*: 16) came as a slip of their tongues, revealing that they really believe in this Day inside themselves. Similarly, the saying of the hypocrites came as such, '... "Give nothing to those who follow Allah's Messenger until they abandon him"...' (*al-Munafiqun*: 7). They made their standard profitable because everything is materialistic and has its price. They presumed that the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will evade him when he does not pay for them.

When the revelation to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was delayed, the disbelievers alleged, 'Muhammad's Lord has forsaken him.'⁽¹⁾ This refers to the remaining natural disposition that spontaneously overwhelms them, when their natural disposition is manifested in the slip of their tongues.

Alternatively, they may have said, 'They say, "Our Lord! Advance us our share of punishment before the Day of Reckoning"' (*Sad*: 16) by way of mockery of the punishment imposed by Allah. They do not believe in the occurrence of punishment; thus, their hastening for it is a form of mockery. However, this sarcasm does not accord with their saying: '... Our Lord ...' (*Sad*: 16).

أَصْبِرْ عَلَى مَا يَقُولُونَ وَادْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوُدَ ذَا الْأَيْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ ﴿١٧﴾ إِنَّا سَخَرْنَا
الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحُنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ ﴿١٨﴾ وَالطَّيْرَ مُحْشُورَةً كُلٌّ لَّهُ أَوَّابٌ ﴿١٩﴾
وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُ ۖ وَءَاتَيْنَاهُ الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَصَّلَ الْخِطَابِ ﴿٢٠﴾

**Bear their words patiently [Prophet]. Remember Our servant
David, a man of strength who always turned to Us [17] We
made the mountains join him in glorifying Us at sunset and**

(1) Ibn Kathir mentioned in his *Tafsir* [4/523] from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah that it has been narrated on the authority of Al-Aswad ibn Qays who heard Jundub saying that Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* delayed his visit to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the polytheists began to say that Muhammad has been forsaken. At this Allah the Glorious and Exalted revealed: 'By the morning brightness and by the night when it grows still, your Lord has not forsaken you [O, Prophet], nor does He hate you.' (*ad-Duha*: 1-3)

**sunrise [18] And the birds, too, in flocks, all echoed his praise [19]
We strengthened his kingdom; We gave him wisdom and a
decisive way of speaking [20] (The Quran, *Sad*: 17 - 20)**

Patience means raising the forbearance of the self above events so that they do not sap its strength. The person afflicted by troubles needs additional strength to his natural one, so he should not let hardships or afflictions undermine his strength.

A human being should be especially aware of doubling an initial affliction; when he is weak in the face of adversities, the affliction and the weakness will be together against him. As for believers, afflictions are of two sorts; the first is the events that have stricken him in which man has no hand such as the careless student who fails in his exam, whose failure is a result of his laxity and negligence. This person should blame and discipline his own self, rectify his mistakes and remedy his vice. This is the real strength, namely to face reality and to bear responsibility. The second affliction is the forbearance with events in which man has no hand. This kind is the predestined affliction imposed by Allah upon people, where He sets nothing but good of people, even if it is seemingly evil.

Likewise, the man may pray for something superficially good according to his perspective, but as he has no answer, he becomes desperate. However, he has forgotten that his Lord knows better where goodness lies; thus, He does not answer him. His Wise answer to man's call is not to respond to his request. Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* teaches believers to reply to those who rejoice at their misfortunes: 'Say, "Only what Allah has decreed will happen to us..."' (*at-Tawba*: 51). Indeed, Allah has never imposed afflictions on people against their interests; afflictions bring nothing but good to believers. They are either to test or to raise the rank of believers or else to show disbelievers the endurance and the unshaken strength of believers in the face of adversity.

From another perspective, an afflicted person may have an adversary. If he has an adversary, he requires greater strength, patience, and endurance because every time he faces him, the depths of his soul urges for revenge, whereas if he does not have an adversary in the decreed affliction imposed by Allah, this is easier to be endured because it is from Allah *the Almighty*. A

person can do nothing in the face of illness or death, except to say, 'There is neither strength nor power except with Allah'; he says this, to reflect his patience and to look forward to his reward.

Accordingly, Allah *the Exalted* says on the affliction, in which there is an adversary: 'Though if a person is patient and forgives, this is one of the greatest things' (*ash-Shura*: 43). A person needs perseverance to assist him either in being patient or in forgiveness. As for the predestined affliction in which there is no adversary, Allah *the Almighty* says: '... Bear anything that happens to you steadfastly; these are things to be aspired to' (*Luqman*: 17). The verse in chapter *Luqman* refers to an affliction with no adversary, so it does not have 'Lam' the emphatic letter in Arabic, whereas the verse in chapter *ash-Shu'ara* refers to an affliction with an adversary and contains 'Lam', the Arabic emphatic letter.

Allah *Glorified is He* consoles Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and alleviates the troubles caused by his people. Their accusations to the Messenger of being a magician, liar, crazy, and other unbearable allegations, saddened and hurt him. Many verses consoles him such as Allah's saying: 'We know well that what they say grieves you [O, Prophet]. It is not you they disbelieve; the evildoers reject Allah's revelation' (*al-An'am*: 33). Moreover, Allah soothes him: '[But] bear you with patience whatever they may say...' (*Sad*: 17); then He gives him an example from previous revelations: '...Remember Our servant Dawud (David) ...' (*Sad*: 17). However, why does Allah mention Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* specifically at this point?

The scholars conceive that Dawud's (David's) people accused him with more atrocious allegations than those charges fabricated against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The disbelievers of Mecca trumped up that he was a magician, a soothsayer and a liar, but Dawud's (David's) people violated his honour, chastity, and purity as they falsely claimed that he sent one of his generals to a distant war, hoping that this general would be killed so as to take his wife. Despite this Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* was patient.

Allah *the Almighty* addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to be patient just like Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him*. Even though Prophet Muhammad is the last prophet and Allah conferred upon him the

merit of laying down the Islamic laws for his nation, yet He tells him to be patient just like Dawud (David) and the other messengers *peace be upon them*. Consequently, it is noticed that all messengers and their people of revelation are one whole; each of them received the appropriate Message from Allah. Hence, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘... Remember Our servant Dawud (David) ...’ (*Sad*: 17). Afterwards, He mentions a number of messengers to show that they are all united under one mission, so there is no distinction between them. Accordingly, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘In matters of faith, He has laid down for you [people] the same commandment that He gave Nuh (Noah), which We have revealed to you [O, Muhammad] and which We enjoined on Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses) and ‘Isa (Jesus): "Uphold the faith and do not divide into factions within it"...'’ (*ash-Shura*: 13).

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* also said, ‘Do not favour me above Yunus (Jonah), the son of Matta.’⁽¹⁾ People do not know the criteria for preferring one to another; they should leave preference to Allah, as He *the Exalted* says: ‘We favoured some of these messengers above others...'’ (*al-Baqara*: 253).

Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* attained a great honour when Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘... Remember Our servant Dawud (David) ...’ (*Sad*: 17). Similarly, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* attained this honour at the beginning of the chapter of *al-Isra*: ‘Glory to Him Who made His servant travel by night...'’ (*al-Isra*: 1). The night journey was unremarkable due to the fact that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was a sincere slave who worshipped Allah earnestly; thereby, he deserved this great honour. Therefore, when the people of Taif shunned, cursed, and abused him, consolation came from Allah to tell him that if the earth does not greet him cheerfully, heaven will.

Allah’s saying, ‘... a man of strength...'’ (*Sad*: 17) means that he is very strong in worship. Indeed, faith requires strength to help a person to be obedient, to dissuade him from disobedience, and to curb the defiance of the self. As for

(1) *Al-Bukhari’s narration is excerpted from the Hadith of ‘Abdullah ibn Mas’ud [3412]: ‘None of you should say that I am better than Yunus (Jonah) the son of Matta’. Similarly, it is narrated by Ibn ‘Abbas [3413] that: ‘It is inappropriate for a slave to say that I am better than Yunus (Jonah) the son of Matta’.*

obedience, it requires strength, as it usually involves heavy acts upon the self, requiring an innate strength. Hence, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘... Though this is hard indeed for anyone but the humble’ (*al-Baqara*: 45).

As for disobedience, it is attractive and pleasurable and it satisfies desires beseeching the self, so it needs determination and strength to restrain a given person. Thus, strength is often mentioned in the Quran, as Allah said about Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* ‘... a man of strength...’ (*Sad*: 17), and on Yahya (John) *peace be upon him*: ‘...O, Yahya (John), hold on to the Scripture firmly...’ (*Maryam* 12).

A believer should have strong will and impetus to perform acts of obedience, as he is inclined to be lazy in performing them. Furthermore, he should have strength to restrain himself from disobedience because he is inclined towards it. Yet, man is only lazy when he detaches his actions from their consequences and requital. If he brings the rewards to mind, obedience will be easy for him as well as disobedience will be proscribed; he will flee from it as he flees from a lion.

Illustratively, if a young man is oppressed by his sexual lusts—the most violent of all human passions—and he is told that he could spend the night with a beautiful girl, but in the morning he would be put inside a blazing oven for an hour, he would refuse the deal. Thus, calling the punishment of a particular act of disobedience to mind prevents a person from it. Similarly, remembering the rewards for obedience drives him towards it.

In the Himalayas on Mount Everest, many people who tried to reach its peak have been found; victims died upon their way up. What drove them to take such dangers and troubles upon themselves was the desire to conquer the highest peak in the world, along with the love of being renowned and to be remembered forever in the halls of fame. To reach this target, they disregarded the dangers.

What makes a man abstinent in performing acts of obedience is that he does not bring the rewards to mind. Were he to remember their rewards, these deeds would have been easy for him. As a poet⁽¹⁾ said:

(1) He was Abu Firas Al-Hamadani, a poet laureate, the nephew of Sayf Ad-Dawlah. He was born in 320 AH, passed away at the age of 37 in 357 AH. Sayf Ad-Dawlah used to=

Achieving impossibly attainable targets is easy for us,
Whoever seeks the beauty finds the dowry inexpensive⁽¹⁾

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained this matter in his saying: ‘No one who commits illegal sexual intercourse is a believer at the moment when he is committing this. No one who steals is a believer at the moment when he is stealing, and no one who drinks wine is a believer at the moment when he is drinking it.’ This means that a person at the time of committing these sins is not in a state of faith, for he has been heedless of Allah *Glorified is He* and heedless of the penalties. Had he brought Allah to mind, he would not have been sinned.

Afterwards, Allah *the Exalted* describes Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him*: ‘... who always turned to Us’ (*Sad*: 17). The Arabic word *awwab* (always repenting) is an emphatic word form that means that he is frequently turning and repenting to Allah. This word indicates that man is not infallible; he is liable to fall into disobedience and that he is liable to return to sin many times after repentance. Yet, what is important is that he renews his repentance and does not resolve to repeat his sin.

Thus, one of Allah’s Names is the Most Forgiving, as He says: ‘Yet I am the Most Forgiving towards those who repent, believe, do righteous deeds and stay on the right path’ (*Ta Ha*: 82). Allah *the Almighty* does not merely say ‘forgiving’ because a human being is prone to heedlessness and his disobedience is repetitive; thus repeated disobedience needs repeated forgiveness. Accordingly, Allah’s Mercy on people entails that he is Most Forgiving. Allah’s description of Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* ‘... who always turned to Us’ (*Sad*: 17), further explained the verse that comes later: ‘... He asked his Lord for forgiveness, fell down on his knees and repented’ (*Sad*: 24).

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘We made the mountains join him in glorifying Us at sunset and sunrise’ (*Sad*: 18). At ‘...sunset...’ (*Sad*: 18) refers to the time

= love him dearly and to accompany him in his battles. He went out to a battle against the Romans who took him as a prisoner for some years until Sayf Ad-Dawlah paid him the ransom. He was killed by the men of his maternal uncle, Sa’d Ad-Dawlah. He wrote 284 poems with 2776 couplets during the ‘Abbasid period..

(1) These lines are excerpted from a 54-couplet long-metre (At-Taweel) poem..

between noon and sunset, whereas: '... and sunrise' (*Sad*: 18) refers to the ascension of the sun to the sky, namely mid-morning. It is known that the mountains are inanimate, which is the lowest creation. However, a human being is the master of this universe, the highest of species, followed by animals, then plants and finally the inanimate creations.

Allah *Glorified is He* tells people that even though man considers inanimate creations to be dead and devoid of life, yet they glorify Him during their life. Indeed, they have a different sort of life although they are immovably static. Nevertheless, each species has a sort of life appropriate for itself. A human being has two lives: one in his awakening and another during his sleeping. The nature of life when he is sleeping differs from that when he is awakened. During sleep with his eyes closed, he can see people and things; he can distinguish between colours, live out long stories, and understand their details. Furthermore, there is a life which follows his death and another one which follows the resurrection.

To establish the evidence that everything in the universe has its appropriate form of life, read Allah's saying: '...There is not a single thing that does not celebrate His praise, though you do not understand their praise...' (*al-Isra*': 44). To evade discrepancies, some scholars conceived that glorification in this verse refers to indication; meaning that inanimate creations identify their Creator and that the glorification here is not that form of articulation. Nonetheless, had the glorification in this verse referred to indication, Allah *the Exalted* would not have said afterwards: '...Though you do not understand their praise...' (*al-Isra*': 44). People can understand glorification by virtue of indication, yet there should be a different form of glorification unknown to them.

Similarly, Allah *the Exalted* mentions birds: '... As do the birds with wings outstretched? Each knows its [own way] of prayer and glorification...' (*an-Nur*: 41). It is not the task of man to search for the way that birds pray; each species knows how to perform its prayers to Allah, the Creator. Likewise, an ant unquestionably saw Sulaiman's (Solomon's) soldiers and rush to warn its colony: '... "Ants! Go into your homes, in case Sulaiman (Solomon) and his hosts unwittingly crush you"' (*an-Naml*: 18). Allah's precision and justice is clear in the ant's speech: '...unwittingly...' (*an-Naml*: 18). This means that they are neither tyrants nor oppressors, yet if they pass over the ant colony, they will crush it inattentively.

The hoopoe of Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* was irrefutably aware of the concept of monotheism. It was the means to the guidance of the people who had gone astray and worshipped the sun instead of Allah. When it came back to Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* it said: ‘...I have learnt something you did not know. I come to you from Sheba with firm news. I found a woman ruling over the people who have been given a share of everything. She has a magnificent throne.’ (*an-Naml*: 22-23)

The hoopoe was affected and enraged as it saw them prostrating to the sun instead of Allah: ‘[but] I found that she and her people worshipped the sun instead of Allah. Satan has made their deeds seem alluring to them, and diverted them from the right path. They cannot find the right path. Should they not worship Allah Who brings forth what is hidden in the heavens and earth and knows both what you people conceal and what you declare? [25]’ (*an-Naml*: 24-25) The hoopoe fully and excellently perceived the whole issue of creed better than many competent people who failed to duly acknowledge this matter.

Furthermore, a human being who has discovered farfetched boundaries in the universe, using his understanding and intellect, was taught by a raven how to cover the corpse and nakedness of his brother: ‘Allah sent a raven to scratch up the ground and show him how to cover his brother’s corpse ...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 31).

Thus, each creature has its distinctive way of life, own language, unique prayer and acts of humility to Allah *the Most High*. So, it is impossible to forcibly accredit only one method for glorifying Allah while excluding others. This is illustrated in Allah’s saying: ‘...So that those who were to die might die after seeing a clear proof and so that those who were to live might live after seeing a clear proof...’ (*al-Anfal*: 42). This implies that they have a life because death (mentioned in the verse) is the opposite of life. Moreover, this is also illustrated in Allah’s saying: ‘...Everything will perish except His Face...’ (*al-Qasas*: 88). By relating the two verses together, it is found that everything has a distinctive way of life, even though it is not known to the people, yet it exists as evidenced by the fact that everything will die. Scientists have recently taken to recording the languages of birds and animals as well as trying to decode the basics of these languages.

Amongst the miraculous things showing Allah’s Power in creation is that when they wanted to send the 110-ton rocket ‘Discovery’ out into the space,

they found a problem that prevented its departure. They found that a 4-gram woodpecker had made 42 holes in the insulation wall of the fuel chamber, the matter that prevented the rocket from taking off. Amazingly, the 4-gram bird was subjugated to build its nest in this enormous rocket and to prevent it from blasting off.

Assumingly, the birds wanted to take vengeance when they saw that man challenges them in the world of flight. In the same respect, he has found that the biggest threat to planes is the world of birds and that bird flocks obstruct aeroplanes and swarm around airports. It seems that there is some kind of enmity between birds and the inventions that compete with them in the world of flight.

Thus, scientists have looked for ways to repel birds from airports; they have come across the idea of recorded sounds that emit electronic birdcalls as a warning to other birds when there is some kind of danger. They broadcast such sounds around the airports, but birds have not been fooled by this deception; so these sounds no longer bother them. Hence, they had to have recourse to another method; they made plastic models of hawks and hung them up because birds are afraid of them. However, the birds perceived the deception and even mocked them when some of them built their nests on the wings of these hawks. As birds have their own world, dominion and secrets, as people know only a few of these mysteries.

Thus, the verse about Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him*, 'We made the mountains join him in glorifying Us at sunset and sunrise' (*Sad*: 18) means that mountains actually glorify Allah; yet their glorification is known only by Allah. However, the miracle granted for Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* is that mountains were glorifying Allah along with him in one voice.

In the same respect, it is wrong to say, 'The pebbles glorified Allah in the hands of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*' because pebbles would glorify Allah even in the hands of Abu Jahl. However, it would be more correct and miraculous to say, 'Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard the glorification of the pebbles in his hands.'

Some of the great scholars have taken this verse, '... at sunset and sunrise' (*Sad*: 18), as evidence of the legality of performing the *Duha* (mid-morning) prayer that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to pray. It

is also called the *Ishraq* prayer.⁽¹⁾ However, what are ‘sunset’ (the period between noon and sunset) and ‘sunrise’ (the period of the ascension of the sun in the sky) prayers referred to? Since they basically depend on the time, thus every place has its ‘sunset’ and ‘sunrise’ that differs from others.

They are related to time so they always exist due to the rotation of time. It has been previously clarified that a given ritual prayer is always performed unceasingly all over the clock. In one place, for example, people are performing the dawn prayer; in another, they are performing the noon prayer, whereas in a third they are performing the afternoon prayer, etc. By this rotation of time, Allah sets His Will to be worshipped interminably in all times. The Prophet said, ‘Indeed, Allah stretches His Hand during the night so that those who commit sins by day may repent, and He stretches His Hand in the day so that those who commit sins by night may repent.’⁽²⁾ There is always nighttime or daytime, thus Allah’s hand is permanently extended.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And the birds, too, in flocks, all echoed his praise’ (*Sad*: 19). The birds assembled around Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* because he had the most beautiful voice in reciting the *Mazamir* (Psalms). The birds gathered, in flocks, around him and echoed his glorification. Thus, there is an orchestra of faith comprising of Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* the mountains, and the birds; all glorified Allah *the Almighty* as one whole chorus.

Hence, the scholars explained Allah’s Words: ‘... all echoed his praise ...’ (*Sad*: 19) to mean that Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him*, the mountains and the birds were all continuously repenting and returning humbly to Allah.⁽³⁾

(1) It is narrated by Ibn ‘Abbas Allah be pleased with him that he said, ‘I used to pass over the verse, ‘... at sunset and sunrise’ (*Sad*: 18), and did not know to what it referred until Umm Hani Allah be pleased with her told me that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* entered upon her and asked for water with which to perform his ablutions. He then prayed *Duha* (mid-morning) and said, "O, Umm Hani, this is called the *Ishraq* prayer." This was related in *Tafsir Al-Qurtubi* [8/5800] and *As-Suyuti* ascribed it in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* [7/150] to At-Tabarani in his book *Al-Awsat* and Ibn Mardawayh from Ibn ‘Abbas.

(2) It was related by Muslim in his *Sahih* [2759], and Ahmad in his *Musnad* [4/395, 404] on the authority of Abu Musa Al-Ash‘ari Allah be pleased with him.

(3) This viewpoint conceives that Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* the mountains and the birds obey and glorify Allah the Exalted whereas, the other viewpoint conceives that the=

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'We strengthened his kingdom; ...' (*Sad*: 20). This means that Allah *Glorified is He* strengthened him with victory and endued him with awe, which is one of the greatest means to power. If Allah wills to weaken a king, He takes his awe-inspiring from people's hearts; accordingly, people no longer fear him, and they gain courage to go against him.

As for Allah's saying, '...We gave him wisdom and a decisive way of speaking' (*Sad*: 20), wisdom means the act of putting things in their appropriate places; thus, this will bring the desired fruits shortly and easily. Allah chooses the most appropriate word in the language; the word *hikma* (wisdom) is derived from the Arabic word *hakama* meaning the rein of a horse. This rein is used to easily guide and control a horse; it is loosened to let the horse go faster or is tightened to slow it down or cause it to halt.

Some scholars said that the adjective 'wisdom' means here prophethood and sober judgement. Both Prophets Dawud (David) and Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon them* were distinguished by dominion and prophethood endued by Allah *the Almighty*. Hence, their opponents were obliterated because absolute power eradicated the severity of the opposition.

The phrase '...We gave him wisdom and a decisive way of speaking' (*Sad*: 20) refers to arbitration between disputants; each of them has his argument, and a judge should arbitrate between them to validate truth and invalidate falsehood. However, Dawud's (David's) enjoyment of sober judgment is destabilised on the grounds that Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* altered one of his father's judgements. Nevertheless, this alteration is also to be accredited to Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* because his son, Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* is the person who judged justly. A person does not like anyone to outperform him except his own son; Hence, Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* was happy by this.

= mountains and the birds obey and return to Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* to glorify Allah with him. This was the viewpoint of Qatada, mentioned by Ibn Kathir [4/30] and in *Tafsir Al-Qurtubi* [8/5802] as well as by As-Suyuti in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* [7/153] on the authority of 'Abd Ar-Razzaq, 'Abd ibn Hamid and Ibn Jarir.

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ نَبَأُ الْخَصْمِ إِذْ سَوَّرُوا الْمِحْرَابَ ﴿٢١﴾ إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَى دَاوُدَ
فَفَزِعَ مِنْهُمْ قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ خَصِمَانِ بَغَى بَعْضُنَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فَأَحْكُم بَيْنَنَا
بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَشْطِطْ وَاهْدِنَا إِلَى سَوَاءِ الصِّرَاطِ ﴿٢٢﴾

Have you heard the story of the two litigants who climbed into his private quarters? [21] When they reached David, he took fright, but they said, ‘Do not be afraid. We are two litigants, one of whom has wronged the other: judge between us fairly – do not be unjust – and guide us to the right path [22] (The Quran, *Sad*: 21-22)

When Allah *the Almighty* asks, ‘Have you heard...?’ (*Sad*: 21), this question emphasises that the person should have been aware of the asked matter. For example, if someone asks, ‘Has not this happened to you?’ this means that it has indeed happened. Similarly, Allah’s saying, ‘Was there not a period of time when man was nothing to speak of?’ (*al-Insan*: 1) means that there was a time when man was not yet thought of. This rhetorical question urges the listener to provide the answer by himself; thus, he will affirm it. This affirmative style approves the answer in contrary to normal statement that can be believed or denied. Alternatively, this rhetorical device leads the listener to wish for tidings. Tidings are not exactly the same as normal statements; rather, they refer to important information that should be highlighted and should raise concern. Daily pieces of information are not tidings, yet the Day of Resurrection mentioned by Allah *the Exalted* is a ‘tiding’, as He *the Exalted* says: ‘What are they asking about? The momentous tidings about which they differ.’ (*an-Naba*: 1-3)

Allah’s saying, ‘...climbed into...’ (*Sad*: 21) means that they did not enter through the door, but from above the wall. This is a proof that these litigants are not earthly creatures; rather, they were a group of angels who came from the heaven in the shape of human beings. The ‘sanctuary’ refers to the sacred place where a worshipper sits alone and talks to his Lord. It is also mentioned in Allah’s saying about Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her*: ‘...Whenever Zakaryya (Zechariah) went in to see her in her sanctuary, he found her supplied with provisions...’ (*Al-Imran*: 37). Nowadays, a sanctuary is the *qibla* (the place indicating direction to the *Ka’ba*).

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'When they reached Dawud (David), he became frightened...' (*Sad*: 22). The question that arises is why would Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* shrink in fear from seeing them while he was in the presence of Allah by praying, glorifying and worshipping Him?

The scholars say that fear is of two kinds: that which moves one's heart to uneasiness, while he seems apparently to be calm and unaffected, whereas there is another kind of fear which leaks from the heart to the external appearance. The fear of Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* was of the second type because, as the scholars say, when the angels saw him in this state they said: '... Do not be afraid ...' (*Sad*: 22). They would not have said this unless his external appearance indicated fear. Allah's saying also implies that they were not amongst his subjects nor even human beings because the subject would not dare to say to the king, 'Fear not.'

As for their saying: '...We are two litigants, one of whom has wronged the other...' (*Sad*: 22), it shows that they are harmonious despite their dispute, for they spoke together in one breath, perhaps in turn, or perhaps, one of them spoke and the others confirmed his. Anyway, their speaking in this harmonious way indicates that there was no dispute between them, and neither of them wanted to get the best of the other. So, they must have had some other goal. The meaning of 'has wronged' is that someone tried to overbear or oppress the other.

Then Allah says: '...Judge between us fairly. Do not be unjust...' (*Sad*: 22). This also shows their boldness, indicating that they are from angels. The phrase, '... Do not be unjust ...' (*Sad*: 22) means 'Do not stray from the truth or commit any wrong.'

Allah *the Almighty* mentions their saying: '...and guide us to the Right Path' (*Sad*: 22). They pray for both of them, without any differentiation, despite of being litigants. Also, they do not mention who is the oppressor or the oppressed. The Right Path refers to the truth itself. Afterwards, they went on explaining their case:

إِنَّ هَذَا أَخِي لَهُ تِسْعٌ وَتِسْعُونَ نَجَّةً وَلِي نَجَّةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ
فَقَالَ أَكْفَلْنِيهَا وَعَزَّنِي فِي الْخِطَابِ ﴿٢٣﴾

**This is my brother. He had ninety-nine ewes and I just the one, and he said, “Let me take charge of her,” and overpowered me with his words’ [23]
(The Quran, *Sad*: 23)**

Their words ‘my brother’ gives an impression of affection; despite their dispute, nevertheless, they are brothers. Similarly, Allah says: ‘Their brother Nuh (Noah) said to them, “Will you not be mindful of Allah?”’ (*ash-Shu’ara*: 106) Regarding the strongest sort of enmity, namely vengeance, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...But if the culprit is pardoned by his aggrieved brother...’ (*al-Baqara*: 178). This kind of affection may soften the heart of a blood avenger over a killer.

So the case is ‘This is my brother. He had ninety-nine ewes and I just had one ...’ (*Sad*: 23). The word ‘ewe’ has three meanings in Arabic; it may refer to a female sheep, to a mountain sheep or to a wild cow. Allah’s saying, ‘... and he said, “Let me take charge of her”...’ (*Sad*: 23) means that a litigant explained the case that he gave the ewe to his brother and that he will take care of it with his many sheep, without additional burdens or workloads.

Allah’s saying, ‘... and overpowered me with his words’ (*Sad*: 23) means that he dominated him with arguments and evidence. It is known that a judge passes his decision based upon evidence and proof as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Verily, I am only a human, and claimants bring to me (their disputes). Perhaps, some of them are more eloquent than others. I judge according to what I hear from them. So, if I pass a judgment in favor of one of you that detracts from his brother’s rights, then he should not take it as I in fact give him a portion of (hell) Fire’.⁽¹⁾

(1) It was narrated in *Sahih Al-Bukhari* [2458] and in *Sahih Muslim* [1713], on the authority of Umm Salama that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard a dispute outside his door, so he went out to them and said, ‘Verily, I am only a human, and claimants bring to me (their disputes). Perhaps, some of them are more eloquent than others. I judge according to what I hear from them. So, if I pass a judgment in favour of one of you that detracts from his brother’s rights, then he should not take it, as I in fact give him a portion of (hell) fire, he may burden himself with it or abandon it.’

So, the litigant means that his brother has beaten him by his speech and the strength of his argument, yet he is not content because he has been oppressed. Thus, he has come to bring his case to Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* to judge it.

Therefore, Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* listened to the claim of the first party but did not listen to the other; this is a mistake of the judge. To this end, the expert judge says that if a claimant comes with his eye has been put out, he should not judge in his favour until he hears from the other party; perhaps, both of his eyes have been put out.

However, Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* gave his judgment directly, as Allah says:

قَالَ لَقَدْ ظَلَمَكَ بِسُؤَالِ نَجِّكَ إِلَىٰ نِعَاجِهِ ۖ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْخُلَطَاءِ لَيَبْغِي بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَقَلِيلٌ مَّا هُمْ ۖ وَظَنَّ دَاوُدُ أَنَّمَا فَتَنَّاهُ فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُ وَحَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ ﴿٢٤﴾ فَغَفَرْنَا لَهُ ۖ ذَٰلِكَ وَإِنَّ لَهُ ۖ عِندَنَا لَزُلْفَىٰ وَحُسْنَ مَّآبٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

David said, ‘He has done you wrong by demanding to add your ewe to his flock. Many partners treat each other unfairly. Those who sincerely believe and do good deeds do not do this, but these are very few.’ [Then] David realized that We had been testing him, so he asked his Lord for forgiveness, fell down on his knees, and repented [24] We forgave him [his misdeed]. His reward will be nearness to Us, a good place to return to [25] (The Quran, *Sad*: 24 - 25)

By his saying: ‘... He has done you wrong ...’ (*Sad*: 24), Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* attributed oppression to one of them. He included an irrelevant clue to be a part of the argument of the judgment. Had not a litigant had ninety-nine sheep, would it have been permissible to ask his brother to give him his ewe? This has no relevance to the case; so, Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* hastily judged before hearing out the other party and then included an irrelevant clue to the case. Perhaps, he was envious of having ninety-nine ewes.

Then Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘... Many partners treat each other unfairly. Those who sincerely believe and do good deeds do not do this ...’ (*Sad*: 24).

This means that this is not a unique case but a widespread and frequent one between partners; one of them often transgresses against the other. Even though they only entered into the partnership through mutual understanding, agreement, and friendship, yet, all this does not prevent him from inclining to oppression. This is similar to the gamblers who, apparently, seem to be good friends; meanwhile, each one of them is set upon taking the money from the others' pockets.

Then Allah *the Almighty* turns our attention to the fact that this matter is not, generally speaking, absolute; there are other partners who are not oppressors. They are the people whom Allah *Glorified is He* described in His saying: '...Those who sincerely believe and do good deeds do not do this...' (*Sad*: 24); yet they are very few or rare: '... but these are very few ...' (*Sad*: 24).

In a Qudsi Hadith, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* narrates from his Lord: 'Allah *the Most High* says: "I make a third with two partners as long as each of them does not cheat the other, but when he cheats him, I depart from their bond."'⁽¹⁾ This means that if treachery and oppression creep into the partnership, Allah *Glorified is He* leaves the bond to be voided of blessings, ruined and lost.

Then Allah *the Exalted* says, clarifying the state of Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* after the case had passed: '... [Then] Dawud (David) realised that We had been testing him ...' (*Sad*: 24); he realised that Allah had tested him. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* taught and tested Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* the rules and principles of judging him with this case. Consequently, it was a necessary lesson for three reasons; the first was that he was scared in the presence of his Lord from similar human beings, thinking that they would kill him. The second mistake was that he judged in favour of the first litigant

(1) *It is narrated by Abu Dawud in his Sunnan [3381], Kitab Al-Buyu' (Book of Commercial Transactions), chapter on Partnerships, on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. Shams Al-Haqq says in his Commentary [Awn Al-Ma'bood 9/170], 'Allah's partnership with them is a metaphor. He equated the blessings, virtue, and profit with the shared wealth and made Himself the third partner.' It is also narrated by Ad-Daraqutni in his Sunnan [Kitab Al-Buyu', Hadith No.139] on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. In the version of Abu Hayyan At-Tayami [140], he says, 'The hand of Allah is over two partners so long as one does not betray his companion. If one of them betrays the other, He raises it from them.'*

without listening to the other, whereas the third error was that he included an irrelevant clue to the case.

Allah's saying, '... We had been testing him ...' (*Sad*: 24) comes from the Arabic phrase *fatan adh-dhahab* meaning that gold is heated with fire to be refined from any impurities.

When Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* realised this, he did not fall into denial or conceitedness; rather, he sought forgiveness from his Lord. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... so he asked his Lord for forgiveness, fell down on his knees ...' (*Sad*: 24); this means that he fell down on the floor unintentionally in prostration on the floor to Allah. Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...[they]... fall down upon their faces [in prostration]...' (*al-Isra*': 107). Thus, the verb 'fall down' has two meanings; the first is that he fell down from his bowing into prostration. The second meaning is that revealed in Allah's saying: '... and repented ...' (*Sad*: 24); this means that he returned to Allah in repentance.

In conclusion, the result comes as Allah says: 'We forgave him [his misdeed]...' (*Sad*: 25). Allah *Glorified is He* promises him with closeness and high rank: '... His reward will be nearness to Us ...' (*Sad*: 25). It is appropriate to his esteem that the mountains and the birds glorified Allah with him. Moreover, Allah promises him with: '... A good place to return to' (*Sad*: 25).

يٰۤدَاوُدُ اِنَّا جَعَلْنٰكَ خَلِيْفَةً فِى الْاَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوٰى فَيُضِلَّكَ
عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَضِلُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ يَّمَسُوْنَ يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٢٦﴾

'David, We have given you mastery over the land. Judge fairly between people. Do not follow your desires, lest they divert you from God's path: those who wander from His path will have a painful torment because they ignore the Day of Reckoning' [26] (The Quran, *Sad*: 26)

The word 'mastery' (*Sad*: 26) either refers to Dawud (David) as vicegerent of Allah on earth in the general sense, for all men are vicegerents; yet Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* was the mainstay of this mastery. Or else, it could mean that he is vicegerent of the prophets in carrying their Messages to mankind. As long as he is the vicegerent, then he is employed; if he does his job well, he will keep it, otherwise it will be taken away from him.

The cause of corruption is that if circumstances meet the human's desires, he imagines that he has become autonomous on other creation; he forgets that he is a vicegerent and not self-sufficient. Only if he remembers that his vicegerency can be taken off at any moment, he will remain well-mannered with his Lord Who made him a vicegerent in the first place, as Allah says: 'But man exceeds all bounds when he thinks he is self-sufficient' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7). Allah says: '... Judge fairly between people ...' (*Sad*: 26); so, as long as a human being is Allah's vicegerent on earth, he should inhabit it, establishing regulations and truth therein. Allah *the Almighty* gives valuable advice to whoever has to judge between people: '... Judge fairly between people. Do not follow your desires ...' (*Sad*: 26). Allah guides the person to the truth which is in front of him, so he should put in it in its right place and should not follow his desires because they would distort his judgment.

In this respect, some scholars have studied Allah's saying concerning Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'He does not speak from his own desire The Quran is nothing less than a revelation that is sent to him.' (*an-Najm*: 3-4) They roused the question that if this is a Divine revelation, so why does Allah reprove him, as in His sayings: 'Allah forgives you [O, Prophet]! Why did you give them permission ...' (*at-Tawba*: 43), 'O Prophet, why do you prohibit what Allah has made lawful to you ...' (*at-Tahrim*: 1) and 'He frowned and turned away when the blind man came to him' (*'Abasa*: 1-2)?

The scholars say that Allah *Glorified is He* is not correcting Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He is simply saying that the Messenger has no personal desires deviating him from the right judgment, whether the matter is decreed by Allah or other matters left to be legislated by him.

When Allah *the Exalted* outlined the task of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he defined the role of the Quran as a miraculous Book, which carries only the principal guidelines of the methodology. It is the guardian of the previous Books, for Allah has confirmed that preceding Books have been taken out of context and altered and that those who believed in them had not been trustworthy. As Allah says: '... In accordance with that part of Allah's Scripture which they were entrusted to preserve...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 44).

The preservation of their revealed Books was a legal responsibility which was liable to being obeyed or disobeyed. However, these people disobeyed the responsibility entrusted upon them, as Allah says: '...They have forgotten some of what they were told to remember...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13). Allah *the Exalted* also mentions those who did not forget but took it out of context: '...They distort the meaning of [revealed] words...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13). Moreover, there are some of them who brought their own speech and inserted it into Allah's speech: 'There are some who twist the Scripture with their tongues to make you [people] think that what they say is part of the Scripture when it is not; they say it is from Allah when it is not. They attribute lies to Allah, and they know it' (*Al-Imran*: 78).

Therefore, those people cannot be trusted with preserving the Book of Allah through experience. This is why Allah *the Exalted* did not entrust the preservation of the Quran to those who believe in it; rather, He took responsibility for the preservation of the Quran. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'We have sent down the Quran Ourselves, and We Ourselves will guard it even before you [O, Prophet]' (*al-Hijr*: 9).

The True Lord *the Exalted* gave this position to His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; to clarify it, the Prophet said, 'The parable of myself and the prophets who came before me is that of a man who has built a house and made it good and beautiful, except for a place of one brick in a corner. People would go round it, appreciating the building, but saying, "Why has this brick not been laid here?" I am that brick and I am the Last of the prophets.'⁽¹⁾

The True Lord *the Most High* clarifies the role of His Messenger in the completion of religion by saying, '...This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My Favour upon you...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 3). This is not all, indeed Allah entrusted him with another role, and that is the protection of this religion, through him and scholars who come after him. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...that you be witnesses over mankind and the Messenger (Muhammad) be a witness over you...' (*al-Baqara*: 143).

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* [3535] and Muslim in his *Sahih* [2286] on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* testifies that he has delivered the message to us, and it is upon us to convey and extend his teachings so that we can testify that we have delivered it to the generations who came after him. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* warned us of a group to come who would disbelieve in his *Sunnah* (way of life/teachings) by saying, ‘We are only responsible for following the Book of Allah. What we find in it to be permissible, we will treat it as permissible; and what we find in it to be impermissible, we will treat as impermissible.’

Tracing the word *ta'ah* (obedience) in the Quran, one finds that it comes in many forms. One time Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger [Muhammad]...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 12), in which the commandment to obey is repeated. Another time He says, ‘And obey Allah and the Messenger [Muhammad]...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 132) without repeating the commandment to obey. Also in another place He says: ‘...Obey Allah and His Messenger...’ (*al-Anfal*: 20).

So, the repetition of the command to obey twice, once for Allah and once for His Messenger, emphasizes that when it is for Allah, it is a command regarding a matter in its totality, such as prayer, and when it is for the Messenger of Allah, it is a command regarding the details of how to pray. If, however, a command from the Messenger of Allah came consecutive and identical to that of Allah, the command is stated once without repetition. If the command is just from the Messenger of Allah, and nothing has come from Allah regarding a specific matter, then Allah says: ‘Obey the Messenger (Muhammad).’

Hence, we can perceive the excellence of expression in Allah’s saying: ‘O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger [Muhammad] and those of you who are in authority...’ (*an-Nisa*: 59). Allah has not said regarding those in authority: ‘and (*obey*) those of you who are in authority.’ Why is this? This is due to His wanting to draw our attention that our obedience to those entrusted with authority emanates from our obedience to Allah and to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. There is no obedience specific to them because there is not any obedience to the creation once it involves disobedience to the Creator.

So, Allah’s saying, ‘...Judge fairly between people....’ (*Sad*: 26), is a command to the generality of mankind, and not particularly to His Messenger. It is

appropriate here to mention Allah's saying to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in another verse: 'We [Allah] have sent down the Scripture to you [O, Muhammad] with the truth so that you may judge between people in accordance with what Allah has shown you. Do not be an advocate for those who betray trust.' (*an-Nisa*': 105)

The previously mentioned verse has a story behind it. It was revealed regarding the following men: Zayd ibn As-Samin, who was a trustworthy man despite being a Jewish, Qatadah ibn An-Nu'man and Tu'mah ibn Ubairiq. Qatadah had armour which Ibn Ubairiq had stolen from him. Ibn As-Samin, the Jew, was unjustly accused of this theft. After a careful investigation, they found the armour with Ibn Ubairiq,⁽¹⁾ the Muslim, and the Jew was proved innocent.

Upon this the people rushed to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* so that he might not pronounce judgment upon the Muslim, as it would be a disgrace for the Muslims in front of the Jews. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* hesitated over this matter and so Allah revealed to him: 'We (Allah) have sent down the Scripture to you [O, Muhammad] with the truth so that you may judge between people in accordance with what Allah has shown you... (*an-Nisa*': 105). This means all the people, be they Jews, Christians or Muslims. In fact, the Messenger of Allah did pass sentence upon the Muslim and cleared the Jew of the charge. Such considerations of judging in favour of a Jew over a Muslim did not carry any weight with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or the Muslims because the truth is more important and more cherished than this or that.

When some Jews witnessed how Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* judged in favour of a Jew man and condemned a Muslim man, they turned towards Islam, and many of them embraced it. Mukhayriq⁽²⁾ Allah

(1) *His name was mentioned by Ibn Hajar Al-`Asqalani in his biographical dictionary of the companions, Al-Isabah fi Tamyiz As-Sahabah [Biography no. 4238]: Tu'mah ibn Ubairiq ibn `Amr Al-Ansari. He was also narrated by Abu Ishaq Al-Mustamli amongst the names of the Companions. He said, 'He participated in all the battles except Badr.' Abu Musa (whose surname, as I assume, is Al-Madini) said, 'There has been some talk about the faith of Tu'mah.'*

(2) *His name was Mukhayriq An-Nadari Al-Isra'ili, from the tribe of Banu An-Nadr. It was also said that he was from Banu Qainuqa. He was a learned scholar who entered Islam and was martyred at Uhud. He left, by will, all his wealth to the Prophet peace=*

be pleased with him was at the head of them. He openly announced his Islam and gave away all his wealth to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. He then set out to join a battle with the Muslims as soon as he heard the call to mobilise—even before offering a single *rak`a* (unit of prayer) to Allah. Mukhayriq *Allah be pleased with him* was martyred during this battle. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said of him, ‘What a good man Mukhayriq was. He entered paradise without having prayed a single *rak`a*.’ This is what the verse means: ‘...Judge fairly between people...’ (*Sad*: 26).

The word ‘...mastery (or successor, *khalifa*)...’ (*Sad*: 26) refers to the fact that Allah has placed us all in charge of the earth. Then over His vicegerents, He has appointed a leader to take care of their affairs and judge between them in any issues of disagreement in accordance with the Law of the One Who has assigned them as vicegerents on earth. The word *khalifa* could also mean the status of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as a successor to all the prophets who preceded him. He would alert people to that which had been erased from the true messages of previous prophets through the course of history. Judgment between people only occurs when they disagree, for, had they not disagreed, they would not have taken the case to a judge. Moreover, it is not for a judge to intervene in those matters over which people agree, except if they conflict with the True Lord *the Most High*. When this happens, it is incumbent upon him to intervene.

The word *Al-haqq* ‘... fairly [or in truth] (*bi Al-haqq*)...’ (*Sad*: 26) refers to something fixed and unalterable, which is an attribute that can only apply to Allah *the Exalted*. As for humans, their affairs are in constant change, and their conditions are temporal and unstable. They can never remain the same. Their lives are full of vicissitudes. However, all the laws and principals that govern human life are from Allah *the Almighty*. Therefore, they are constant and immutable. Since Allah *the Exalted* has completed His Blessings upon us, perfected His religion, and has chosen for us Islam as our religion, and then no

= *and blessings be upon him who gave it away in charity. The Prophet peace and blessings be upon him said of him, ‘Mukhayriq is the forerunner of the Jews, Salman is the forerunner of the Persians, and Bilal is the forerunner of the Ethiopians.’ See Tamyiz As-Sahabah by Ibn Hajar [Biography no. 7843].*

one should emend anything in it. Any amendments would be an assault on Allah's thorough and perfect knowledge of the wisdom behind each and every ruling.

The opposite of *Al-haqq* (truth) is *Al-batil* (falsehood). Sometimes falsehood predominates, but the truth is the truth and ultimately will be dominant. Sometimes the True Lord *Glorified is He* allows falsehood to predominate for a reason so that people may be bitten and burned by its fire, with which the sweetness of truth becomes evident. It is only when the bitterness of falsehood bites and hurts that people will flee in pursuit of the truth.

So, even if falsehood lifts its head up for a while, it is still truth that is uppermost. The True Lord *the Most High* gives us an example to illustrate this issue by saying: 'He [Allah] sends water from the sky which fills riverbeds to overflowing, each according to its measure. The stream carries on its surface a growing layer of froth, like the froth that appears when people melt metals in the fire to make ornaments and tools. In this way, Allah illustrates truth and falsehood—the froth disappears, but what is of benefit to mankind remains in the earth—this is how Allah makes illustrations.' (*ar-Ra'd*: 17)

The truth is absolute and unchangeable. Furthermore, it is this changelessness that makes us realise that Divine Laws have not come to make the Word of Allah uppermost; rather, it is to put down the word of disbelievers. This meaning is clear in Allah's saying: '... and [He] made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, while the word of Allah that is the highest...' (*at-Tawba*: 40). Allah *the Exalted* did not conjoin the second phrase to the first. He did not say 'and made Allah's Words the highest', for Allah's Cause does not need to be made supreme. It is an unalterable reality; it is the eternal truth.

Allah then says, addressing our master Dawud (David) *peace be upon him*: '... Do not follow your desires, lest they divert you from Allah's Path...' (*Sad*: 26). The word *Al-hawa* (a vain desire or inclination) refers to the inclination of the soul to something it desires without looking to the principles that govern that thing. Inclinations differ as people differ. Even close friends differ in their food, drink and tastes; when they buy something, each buy different sorts and different things. Indeed, there is a common factor binding them, which is their friendship, but still their desires are different. If your

desires differ from mine, we must have recourse to a source of uncontested opinion. If that unanimous source is a higher authority above us, there is no objection. Objections arise when one becomes subject to one's equal and lets him rule over his affairs and he follows his opinion.

The True Lord *the Exalted* decides this issue by saying: 'But if the truth were in accord with their own likes and dislikes, the heavens and the earth would surely have fallen into ruin ...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 71). We can understand how conflicting desires could ruin life on earth, but how could it ruin the heavens? Furthermore, why did Allah mention the heavens before the earth?

The scholars say that this is indeed so. Ruination would spread beyond the earth and corrupt the heavens as well, meaning that it would corrupt Allah's Law which He has sent down from heaven. If it would corrupt Allah's heavenly revealed laws which constitute the truth for mankind, then this corruption exceeds the corruption of what is on the earth. When some disbelievers said, 'Or you [Muhammad] make the heaven fall upon us in fragments as you have claimed...' (*al-Isra'*: 92), this was *hawa* (vain desire). Had Allah answered their request, the heavens and the earth would indeed have been ruined. It is from Allah's Mercy that He restrained their desires in the speculative systems that treat people justly in the issues of difference. As for those matters that involve no difference of opinion, Allah *the Almighty* has left them open for people to do with them as they please.

If someone were to ask, 'Why has Allah left the matters in which there can be no difference of opinion open?' The answer is that people will arrive to one truth upon which they will agree, and this is just what we see in empirical science, for example. It is a field which is open to all, Russians as well as Americans. Indeed, we see them place strong protective measures for their research so that it may not reach anyone else nor allow anyone to steal or plagiarise what others have achieved.

So heaven does not interfere in matters over which we will agree. This is a question that our master Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* decisively settled, giving us the example himself in the context of the pollination of date palms. When he suggested to some date growers that they should not pollinate them manually, it was subsequently a bad harvest year and the date

palms did not produce fruit. So Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to them, 'You know better about the affairs of your world.'⁽¹⁾

Why is this so? The reason for this is by experimentation you will reach one conclusion upon which you will all agree and take it from others. As for inclinations and desires, they differ from one person to another, and from which conflicts—serious or minor—may stem.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* clarifies the reason for the prohibition of following one's desires by saying: '... lest they divert you from Allah's Path ...' (*Sad*: 26). That is, do not follow your desires because they will lead you astray from Allah's Way. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clarified this matter for us when he drew a straight line for the Companions along with numerous other lines around it, and then he recited the noble verse: 'And verily, this is my Straight Path, so follow it, and follow not (other) paths, for they will separate you away from His Path...' (*al-An'am*: 153).

No matter how small they are, differences cause the divergence of paths. One millimetre can make paths diverge. If two lines were drawn from one point and one of them diverged from the other by just one millimetre, the result would be that the farther one went from the original point, the greater the divergence would be. Have you seen, for example, what the train controller who controls and changes the directions of the trains does? He moves the end of a lever which moves no more than five millimetres, and because of this movement, the train is directed away from Alexandria to Aswan. This is how paths diverge. A huge difference can arise from a tiny move. A miniscule difference at the point of origin results in a bigger and bigger difference the farther away from it one moves.

Similarly, just as various paths diverge, so does a single path when it is broad and has room for divergence. The desert path to Alexandria, for instance, is a wide dual-direction highway. One can travel on one of the two routes in a

(1) *Narrated by Muslim in his Sahih (2362) on the authority of Rafi' ibn Khadij that the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him said, when the palm trees did not bear fruits, 'I am only a human being. When I tell you to do something with regard to your religion, and then follow it, but if I tell you to do something based on my own opinion, I am only a human being.' Also according to the Hadith narrated by Anas [2363], he said, 'You know better about your worldly affairs.'*

winding manner, going right and left, the consequence of which is a lengthened journey. Therefore, people choose the 'middle way', which means that you keep the two sides of the road at an equal distance from yourself.

The True Lord *the Exalted* then clarifies the outcome of deviation from the main path by saying: '...Those who wander from His Path will have a painful torment because they ignore the Day of Reckoning' (*Sad*: 26). Heedlessness of this Day and forgetting the final end is what causes people to fall into intense punishment. If a human keeps in the forefront of his mind the recompense for bad deeds, he will not do them. Likewise, if he recalls the reward of good deeds, he will be neither careless nor lazy about performing them.

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَطْلًا ذَٰلِكَ
ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ ﴿٢٧﴾

**It was not without purpose that We created the
heavens and the earth and everything in between.
That may be what the disbelievers assume – how they
will suffer from the Fire! [27] (The Quran, *Sad*: 27)**

The meaning of the verse is that Allah has not created the heaven and the earth and all that is between them without meaning and purpose; rather, He created them with exact wisdom. This is why you find them constant and unchanging. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor does the night outstrip the day. They all float, each in an orbit.' (*Ya Sin*: 40) Had the creation been ordered otherwise, there would be collisions every moment between the celestial bodies and the constellations.

'... That is the assumption of those who disbelieve...' (*Sad*: 27) means that disbelievers think that they have been created in vain, to no end, to no purpose. This is their conjecture, and it is no more than conjecture. Had the creation happened randomly as they imagined, it would not have been a creation. Since a created being must have a purpose in the mind of its creator before he makes it. As we said, the person who invented the washing machine or the refrigerator defined its purpose before making it. He did not make it and then say, 'Think over and try to find some use for this machine.'

It is the one who makes something who defines its role. He lays down the principles for the upkeep of his creation. For this reason, we say that all the deviation in the world stems from the desire of its inhabitants themselves to lay down the purpose of Allah's creation. They want to lay down the principles for the upkeep of Allah's creation and ignore those that Allah *the Almighty* has laid down. They feign ignorance of what Allah has decreed and appointed and do not refer the matter to its proper and relevant authority as one should in worldly affairs. Each manufacturer knows best what is good for his product.

Then comes the threat: '...so woe to those who disbelieve from the Fire.' (*Sad: 27*) The Creator *the Exalted* often warns and threatens His created beings with punishment in the Fire. Some people see in this a kind of cruelty, yet, actually, this is a form of mercy, not cruelty. It is out of Allah's Mercy towards us that He stresses the enormity of sin and clearly states the punishment for it. It is out of His Mercy that He tells us of the subsequent retribution before a particular sin is committed. On recalling the prospect of punishment, a person recoils and refrains from a particular sin. So, great wisdom underlies such warnings and threats.

أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَالْمُفْسِدِينَ
 فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْفُجَّارِ

**But would We treat those who believe and do good deeds
 and those who spread corruption on earth as equal?**

**Would We treat those who are aware of God and those
 who recklessly break all bounds in the same way? [28]**

(The Quran, *Sad: 28*)

After having mentioned the requital of disbelievers in the fire, the True Lord *the Most High* wanted to state its opposite; it is through opposites that things become distinct. Allah *the Almighty* chose to compare for us disbelievers and believers. Believers are the people who have lived righteously by the standards of Allah's Law, followed the Straight Path, held their hands and tongues from harming others and have been a source of peace and happiness. How could we put such people on an equal footing with corrupt disbelievers?

This is a hint from the True Lord *the Exalted*. It is as though He is telling us to be wary of equating these with those. Beware not to be overcome by mercy for the oppressors and those who spread corruption on the earth. For if you have mercy on them, you have indeed put them on an equal footing with believers.

Therefore, we used to refute the communists by saying to them, ‘You have certainly taken your revenge on your enemies, the capitalists and the feudalists, and you perpetrated horrors upon them, but what about those of them who died before you could get to them and extract your revenge? Undoubtedly, they oppressed people and still went unpunished.’ So you have to admit to the existence of another life in which vengeance will be exacted on evildoers who escaped it in this world. Otherwise, the doers of good will be equated with evildoers.

Allah *Glorified is He* refers to ‘... those who spread corruption in the earth...’ (*Sad*: 28) since He created the earth in a state of well-being. If one is unable to contribute to its well-being, by helping people and making them happy, then one should at least preserve it as it is and not corrupt it. There are many facets to well-being on earth. To explain this idea, we previously used the example of a well. One either leaves it as it is so that people can benefit from it or one can improve upon it by building a wall around it to protect it, or adding some equipment to it to help lift the water, etc. One could also throw rubbish into it, and this would be an example of corruption.

We also said that if a person entered a garden that no one had entered before, he would find it in its original, natural state. He would see no broken trees nor smell any foul odours, despite the presence of insects, animals, dung, etc. However, as soon as people would start frequenting it, it would become damaged and spoiled. Why is this? This is so because it is no longer in its original state of well-being in which Allah has created it. People have not interacted with it according to Allah’s Way. Had they done so, everything would have proceeded in a rightly manner.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* emphasises this principle by saying, ‘...or shall We treat the pious as the wicked?’ (*Sad*: 28) *Al-fajir* (the wicked) is the one who departs or quits (*yafsuq*) the way and law that protects him and

his society, just as the fresh, ripe date detaches itself from its peel (*tafsuq*). Before protecting society from a wicked individual, the True Lord *the Exalted* protects an individual from the society even though the individual is but one person, while society is a multitude. Accordingly, it is the individual who benefits and gains most from Allah's Way.

Likewise, sooner or later, when a person is confronted with an issue of private concern or interest, he turns to the truth out of necessity since he cannot find protection except through it. We have previously given an example of university students. The story of the three adolescent young men that we have previously mentioned is a case in point. These three persons followed their own evil whims and caprice. They remained on this bad condition for a long period of time until one of them showed repentance to Allah, which is why the other two bitterly mocked him and stigmatized him with the worst characteristics. But the question to be asked now is "If one of these two men had a sister, would he allow her to get married to his companion who repented or to the one who was still committing evil?!" It goes without saying that he will allow her to get married to the righteous one, not the evil-doing one. Certainly, he will prefer the latter companion because he is confident about him and trusts him. Thus, the truth stays the truth, virtue remains virtue and the righteous, and the wicked cannot be regarded as equal.

The True Lord *the Most High* then gave His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* some words of assurance to comfort and solace him. The stories in the Quran mainly came as a source of comfort and strength to his heart.

كُنْتُ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٢٩﴾

This is a blessed Scripture which We sent down to you [Muhammad], for people to think about its messages, and for those with understanding to take heed [29] (The Quran, *Sad*: 29)

The 'Divine Book' referred to here is the Noble Quran. The word *Mubarak* (blessed) signifies something that gives benefit and goodness above that which is expected of it. As when we say of something that, 'we take from it, yet it does not decrease', we call it 'blessed'. Similarly, a man who lives on a moderate income, and yet we see him raising his children in the best way and

living amongst people as though he was rich. So people say of him, ‘Indeed, he is a blessed man,’ and, ‘Surely, Allah blesses his small wage so it becomes plentiful.’ How is it, though, that Allah puts blessings in small things of life?

The scholars say that first Allah bestows contentment upon the small portion, so its owner feels content with it. Then Allah *the Almighty* protects him from extra expenses so that all his expenses go towards useful and necessary things. People imagine that *rizq* (one’s provision or sustenance) is synonymous with wealth. They do not know that protection from expenses is a form of *rizq*. We say that *rizq* can be positive in the sense of gaining income, and it can be negative in the sense of minimising expenses.

An example of this is a man who lives off of lawful earnings. When his son gets sick, a cup of tea and an aspirin are sufficient as a cure for him. As for the one who lives on ill-gotten money and accumulates fortunes, when his son gets sick, he must take him to the best doctors and spend many times what the first one has spent.

The Quran is indeed blessed and its verses are blessed as well in terms of the apparent rulings since it trains one to be upright. This uprightness, if looked at from an economical perspective, costs one nothing. Indeed, it costs one nothing to be upright; it is deviance that costs one dearly. That is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘A believer eats in one intestine (is satisfied with a little food), while a disbeliever eats in seven.’⁽¹⁾

Indeed, a disbeliever will eat a lot to feel satiated, but a few morsels suffice a believer and keep his body nourished. A believer does not eat until he is hungry, and when he gets hungry, any food becomes tasty to him, even if it is just some dried bread and salt. A wise Arab said, ‘The food of the hungry is (always) delicious.’ Nowadays, however, we see people preparing

(1) Narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* [2060] [184] in the Book of *Al-Ashribah* (drinks) on the authority of Jabir and Ibn ‘Umar Allah be pleased with them both. An-Nawawi said, in his commentary on *Sahih Muslim*: ‘According to another narration, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said this after he had entertained a disbeliever as a guest. He drank the milk of seven goats. On the next morning, after he embraced Islam, he drank the milk of one goat and could not finish the second goat’s milk.’ The point of the Hadith is to content oneself with little worldly provisions and to urge oneself to practice *Zuhd* (renunciation) and satisfaction (with whatever Allah has ordained).’

salads, appetisers and hors d'oeuvres before their food. Why is this so? It is to encourage people to eat a lot, almost to the point of surfeit, and then after that they need to take digestive aids, laxatives and other medications.

These are not the characteristics of a believer. Our master, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* laid down a method for healthy eating. He said *peace and blessings be upon him* 'We are a people who do not eat until we are hungry; and when we eat, we do not eat to our fill.'⁽¹⁾ This method takes care of the economical side and achieves welfare in all aspects – economically, socially, politically and security-wise, without incurring costs.

The Quran is blessed from another perspective. When you interact positively with its doctrine and apply it lovingly and appropriately, the True Lord reveals special secrets to you that arouse the wonder of others and opens up for you marvellous spiritual doors. Was not Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* a prophet of Allah, amazed by the deeds of a righteous slave of Allah? This righteous slave worshipped Allah according to Musa's Law, yet despite this, Allah commanded Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to follow and learn from him with sincerity and zeal. When Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* followed him with sincerity and love, he learnt tremendous lessons from him. This is related in Allah's saying: 'O, you who believe! If you obey and fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion (to tell right from wrong), will expiate for you your sins and forgive you, and Allah is the Owner of the Great Bounty.' (*al-Anfal*: 29)

The word *furqan* (the criterion or discriminator between true and false) used in this verse does not refer to the Quran; rather, it is a criterion specific to those who follow the primary *Furqan*, namely the Quran. Furthermore, by means of it, they reach the level of *taqwa* (God-fearing piety). The True Lord *Glorified is He* gives them a special criterion because they have followed the Quran with sincerity and ardent love.

The meaning of *tadabbur* (pondering or reflection) in '... that they may ponder over its verses...' (*Sad*: 29) is not to take a superficial look at matters;

(1) Narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (vol. 4, p. 132) and At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (2380) on the authority of Al-Miqdam ibn Mu'id Yakrib that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The son of Adam fills no vessel worse than his stomach. Sufficient for the son of Adam are a few morsels to keep his back straight. If he must eat more, it should be one-third for his food, one-third for his liquids, and one-third for his breath.'

rather, it is to look contemplatively into their consequences or end results. We should look at the background issues and consequences so that we may extract the lessons they teach. It was for this reason that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* objected when Al-Khidr (a righteous servant of Allah) put a hole in the boat; he looked at the surface of this matter and its outward logic. Logic says that a sound boat is better than a faulty one, yet this righteous servant of Allah had another criterion. He did not compare a sound boat with a holed one; rather, he compared between a holed boat and no boat at all. Which is better? There was an oppressor who was taking people's boats if they were sound. So this hole saved the boat from this oppressor, and it remained the property of its owners. This is knowledge of the hidden realms and the Unseen that Allah bestows upon whomever He wills of those of His slaves who have been sincere to Him.

Allah continues: '... and that people of understanding may remember.' (*Sad*: 29); this means people with attentive and heedful minds. Pay attention here that the True Lord *the Exalted* extorts us to use our intellect and understanding to reflect upon His signs within the universe. A person who is equal to you or someone with whom you have some business will not draw your attention to some item unless he is sure that you will become interested in it; otherwise, he will avoid it or conceal its defects. An example of this is someone who is selling you a good piece of merchandise; you will see him explaining its merits and invite you to test it yourself and check its quality. He will also tell you about other not as obvious, or subtle, features.

As for the one selling poor merchandise, he distracts you from its faults and busies your mind with other things so that you will not notice the defects in the goods. For instance, one enters a shop to buy shoes. If they are too tight, the seller says to you, 'They stretch with wear.' However, if they are too big, he will say, 'They look a little small for you.' As far as he is concerned, the important thing is to engage your mind until you buy it.

The True Lord *the Most High* invites us to reflect upon His signs, ponder them and search thoroughly and carefully into them because He knows that when we look and reflect on them, we will be convinced by them and that through them we will arrive at the truth. Despite this, we hear some people

who take a stance on some religious questions, say, 'This matter is beyond research. There is no role for the intellect in it.' We answer this by saying that we have been ordered to carefully consider and reflect upon the universe, so there is nothing wrong with looking into them.

After this, the sequence of the Quran brings us back once again to our master Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* not to tell us his story, but because he was the father of another prophet, our master Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon them*:

وَوَهَبْنَا لِدَاوُدَ سُلَيْمَانَ نِعَمَ الْعَبْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ ﴿٣٠﴾ إِذْ عُرِضَ عَلَيْهِ بِالْعَشِيِّ
الْصَّافِنَتُ الْإِحْيَادُ ﴿٣١﴾ فَقَالَ إِنِّي أَحْبَبْتُ حُبَّ الْخَيْرِ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّي حَتَّى
تَوَارَتْ بِالْحِجَابِ ﴿٣٢﴾ رُدُّوهَا عَلَيَّ فطَفِقَ مَسْحًا بِالسُّوقِ وَالْأَعْنَاقِ ﴿٣٣﴾

We gave David Solomon. He was an excellent servant who always turned to God [30] When well-bred light-footed horses were paraded before him near the close of day [31] He kept saying, 'My love of fine things is part of my remembering my Lord!' until [the horses] disappeared from sight [32] 'Bring them back!' [he said] and started to stroke their legs and necks [33] (The Quran, *Sad*: 30 - 33)

One of the wonders of the Quranic order regarding the mention of Dawud (David) and Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon them* is a common aspect found in verses related to both. The first mentioning of our master Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* occurs in the chapter of *al-Baqara* in Allah's saying, 'So they defeated them by permission of Allah, and Dawud (David) killed Jalut (Goliath)...' (*al-Baqara*: 251), and the last mentioning of him is in the chapter of *Sad*: 'And to Dawud (David) We gave Sulaiman (Solomon)...' (*Sad*: 30). Similarly, the first mentioning of our master Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* occurs in the chapter of *al-Baqara* in Allah's saying, 'And they followed [instead] what the devils had recited during the reign of Sulaiman (Solomon)...' (*al-Baqara*: 102), while the last mentioning of him is in Allah's saying: 'And We certainly tried Sulaiman (Solomon) and placed on his throne a body; then, he returned...' (*Sad*: 34).

Allah *the Most High* says: ‘And to Dawud (David) We gave (*wahabna*) Sulaiman (Solomon)...’ (*Sad*: 30). The verb *wahab* means to give without return. If someone commented saying that all granting of children is a bestowment from Allah without return, we would say, ‘Yes.’ However, the Creator *Glorified is He* endows each human being with a self, then He provides that self with other gifts, which are the special personal traits and attributes of his character, such as leadership, wisdom, etc. For this reason, those who ask for a specific gift while being undeserving or unqualified for it, request it by way of gift such as in the verse saying: ‘...he [Sulaiman (Solomon)] said, "My Lord, forgive me, and bestow upon me a kingdom such as shall not belong to any other after me."'’ (*Sad*: 35) Likewise, Allah says: ‘So give me [Zakaryya (Zechariah)] from Yourself an heir who shall inherit me and inherit (also) the posterity of Ya`qub (Jacob). And make him, my Lord, one with whom You are well-pleased!’ (*Maryam*: 5-6)

Our master Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* was a very old man when he asked Allah for a son. His wife was also barren, so all the means for having children were unfavourable and unsound. So Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* asked Allah *the Almighty* to bestow upon him a child by way of gift from Him. Furthermore, even though all means are, in essence, a gift from Allah, yet they are a general gift. It is only those particular qualities with which a person is endowed that are considered a special gift.

Allah *the Exalted* then says: ‘... How excellent a slave! (*ni`ma l-`abdu*) ...’ (*Sad*: 30). We know that the word *ni`ma* (how excellent!) is used in Arabic for praise. The praise in this context is for a creedal characteristic, that is, ‘*ubudiyyah*’ (worshipful servitude, devotion, and obedience to Allah). We mentioned previously that people detest the words ‘*abd*’ (a slave) and ‘*ubudiyyah*’ (slavery—when not related to Allah), and they are right to detest them. In relation to humans, slavery is enforced exploitation and dispossession of the assets of a person by his master. However, regarding slavery to Allah, it is the slave who profits and benefits from his master. This is the proper form of slavery that is considered an elevation in rank and dignity for a slave.

Therefore, when the True Lord *the Exalted* conferred the blessing of the *Isra`* (Night Journey) and *Mi`raj* (Ascension to Heaven) upon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* He proclaimed it by saying: ‘*Glorified is He*

[Allah] Who took His slave [Muhammad] for a journey by night from *Al-Masjid Al-Haram* [at Mecca] to the Farthest Mosque [in Jerusalem] ...' (*al-Isra'*: 1). It is as though his servitude to his Lord is what brought him to this level.

Just to give an example from ordinary life—and indeed Allah is beyond comparison—think about a master craftsman who has apprentices. He will draw near to himself the good learner, who is sincere, efficient, and obedient and renders good service. Due to these qualities, he will single him out to teach him special skills. He will not keep back from him the finer points and secrets of his craft. He will impart some of the subtleties of his craft to him which he does not grant to other apprentices.

So, even though Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* was a king, his Lord praised him for the attribute of servitude: '... How excellent a slave!' (*Sad*: 30). Then Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies for us the basis of praising him for servitude by saying: '... Verily, he was ever oft-returning in repentance (to Us)!' (*Sad*: 30) This means that he was consistently repenting and turning back to Allah. Whenever he slipped up, even in the slightest way, he would reproach himself for it, turn back to his Lord, and repent to Him. Allah *the Most High* describes repentance by saying: 'The repentance accepted by Allah is only for those who do wrong in ignorance [or carelessness] and then repent soon after ...' (*an-Nisa'*: 17).

The phrase, '... in ignorance [or carelessness] (*bi-jahalah*)...' (*an-Nisa'*: 17) means that they do not commit wrongdoings intentionally or by design. Furthermore, if they fall into sin, they do not feel pleased with it and do not brag about it; rather, they are saddened and they blame themselves: '...it is those to whom Allah will turn in forgiveness, and Allah is Ever-Knowing and Wise. But repentance is not [accepted] of those who [continue to] do evil deeds up until, when death comes to one of them, he says, "Indeed, I have repented now" or of those who die while they are disbelievers. For them We (Allah) have prepared a painful punishment.' (*an-Nisa'*: 17-18)

We can illustrate the difference between these two types of people using the example of a group of students who travelled on scholarship to France, for example. Amongst them was an upright man, committed to Allah's Path.

One night, he was surprised by a dissolute woman who presented herself to him and kept seducing him until he finally gave in and committed adultery with her. This person sinned ignorantly (*bi-jahalah*), that is, without intention or planning. This is opposed to the one who would go out looking for debauchery and collecting the addresses of those who commit indecencies. This is the one who wilfully pursues and commits sins.

The word *awwab* means one who constantly turns to Allah in repentance. It is an intensive form *mubalaghah* and means 'someone who repeatedly returns to the truth'. Such a person does not rejoice in sin but regrets it at once, redresses the wrong done, and gets himself back to the right path. The proof of this is Allah's saying after it: 'When there were displayed before him, in the afternoon, nobly bred, swift-footed steeds [for fighting in Allah's Cause]. And he said, "Alas! ..."' (*Sad*: 31)

The word *Al-'ashiyi* signifies the time period after the mid-noon till sunset. The horses were 'displayed before him', as in a military parade in which the leader inspects his troops and forces. The word '...nobly bred steeds (*Al-safinat*)...' (*Sad*: 31) is the plural of the word *safin*. It is used to refer to a horse that is of noble lineage. One can recognise a highborn horse by its gait and stature. It does not stand on four feet but gracefully upon three, as though in a state of complete readiness. The word '...swift-footed steeds (*Al-jiyad*) ...' (*Sad*: 31) is the plural of the word *jawad* and means strong and fast horses.

So, when these nobly bred and swift-footed steeds and military forces were paraded before our master Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* he said, "Alas! I did love the good [these horses] instead of remembering my Lord' until [the sun] had hidden in the veil [of night].' (*Sad*: 32) The scholars said that the word 'good' (*khayr*) is used here to refer to the horses based on the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that stated, 'Goodness (*khayr*) is tied to the forelocks of horses until the Day of Resurrection.'⁽¹⁾

(1) Agreed upon Hadith narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* [987] in the Book of *Zakat* [Hadith no. 26] on the authority of Abu Hurayra that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Goodness is in the forelocks of horses until the Day of Resurrection', or he said 'tied to the forelocks of horses until the Day of Resurrection.' *Al-Bukhari narrated it in his Sahih* [2850] on the authority of 'Urwah ibn Al-Ja'd.

He *peace and blessings be upon him* also said, 'The best thing you can raise is a horse whose reins you hold, and once you hear any shout [of battle] you fly towards it.'⁽¹⁾

Therefore, our Lord when commanding us to prepare for the enemies of His Law and Religion, He said: 'And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy ...' (*al-Anfal*: 60). What this means is a general force and more specifically horses.

So, when the horses were displayed before Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* he said, '... I did love the good [these horses] instead of remembering my Lord' until [the sun] had hidden in the veil [of night].' (*Sad*: 32) This means that the love felt for horses was not out of boasting or pride, like those who breed horses for show, racing, and fame. My love for them only springs from the remembrance of my Lord and His Way. He has ordered the preparation of power and instruments of power by which His Way can be established on earth.

The subject of the verb *tawarat* (became concealed or disappeared) in the part of the verse saying, '... until [the sun] had hidden in the veil [of night] ...' (*Sad*: 32) is *mustatir* (implicit or hidden pronoun, referring to the sun setting). So when the subject is not directly stated, it is implied or understood from a previous mention such as in one's saying, 'A man came to me and I honoured (him)', that is, I honoured the man previously mentioned.

(1) *It was narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Amongst the best lives one can lead is that of a man who holds the reins of his horse in Allah's Cause. He flies on its back every time he hears a shout or commotion (of battle). He flies on his horse, seeking the places where he can expect martyrdom or death (in Allah's Cause). Or that of a person who tends sheep at the top of one of these peaks or in the bottom of one of these valleys, establishing the prayer, paying the charity, and worshipping his Lord until the certainty (death) comes to him. He has no concern with the affairs of people except the doing of good.'* It was related by Muslim in his *Sahih* [1889] in the Book of *Al-Imarah* (Government) in the chapter of the merit of *Jihad* (Striving) and *Ribat* (guarding the Muslim frontiers in Allah's Cause) [125]. Ibn Majah also narrated a similar version in his *Sunnan* [3977] in the Book of *Al-Fitan* (Trials) in the chapter of seclusion.

Allah's saying, '... until [the sun] had hidden in the veil [of night] ...' is a common sight of the sun until it sets. Accordingly, the meaning is 'until the sun went down and disappeared from view'.

Some scholars⁽¹⁾ held the opinion that Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* missed the 'isha' (night prayer) because of his preoccupation with the display of horses, and when this happened, he said, 'Bring them back to me ...' (*Sad*: 33), meaning the horses, '... then he began to pass his hand over their legs and their necks.' (*Sad*: 33) His stroking of their shanks and necks was out of courtesy and care for them. The legs and necks of the horses are mentioned specifically because they are its noblest parts. The neck carries the mane, while the legs are the instruments of lifting and running. Thus, the meaning is that he was pleased with them and so he caringly stroked their necks and legs.

However, some of the exegetes⁽²⁾ had another opinion. They said that what was meant by the word *mash* in this verse is that he wanted to slaughter and kill them because they distracted him from his prayer. This opinion is closer to the *isra'iliyyat* (unreliable narratives originating from Jewish and Christian narrations) because it was not the horses that busied him in such a way. Rather, it was he who busied them and everyone else around him. So, why place the guilt on the horses?

What is astonishing about the *isra'iliyyat* is that they contain so many narratives that cast vile aspersions of the prophets of the children of Israel.

(1) *This was the opinion of Al-Hasan Al-Basri, Al-Kalbi and Muqatil. Al-Qushayri said that at that time there were no noon (zhuhr) or afternoon ('asr) prayers. Rather this was a supererogatory prayer from which he was distracted. [This opinion was also mentioned by Al-Qurtubi in his exegesis (vol. 8, p. 5837).] Ibn Jarir and Ibn Mundhir narrated that 'Ali Allah be pleased with him. said, 'The prayer which Sulaiman (Solomon) peace be upon him missed was the afternoon ('asr) prayer.' [It was mentioned by As-Suyuti in Ad-Durr Al-Manthur (vol. 7, p. 177).]*

(2) *Two opinions are held regarding this issue:*

1. *He started to stroke their manes and hamstrings. This opinion was attributed to Ibn 'Abbas and was narrated by Ibn Jarir At-Tabari, Ibn Mundhir, and Ibn Abu Hatim.*
2. *He cut their throats and legs with a sword. This opinion was attributed to Ubay ibn Ka'b and was narrated by At-Tabarani in his book Al-Awsat and by Al-Isma'ili in his Mu'jam and Ibn Mardawayh through a good chain of narrators.*

We often see them accusing their own prophets of things that totally do not befit such a station. The underlying reason behind these false accusations was their own indulgence in sins; those who transgress the bounds of right while following a religion try to find a shortcoming in the one who has brought him this religion to justify their own excesses. It was due to this that they fabricated derogatory and slanderous accusations against their Prophets.

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا سُلَيْمَانَ وَأَلْقَيْنَا عَلَى كُرْسِيِّهِ جَسَدًا ثُمَّ أَنَابَ ﴿٣٤﴾

We certainly tested Solomon, reducing him to a mere skeleton on his throne [34] (The Quran, *Sad*: 34)

The word *Fitnah* (trial or test from which derives the verb *fatana*) means to test. *Fitnah* is not unpleasant in itself; it is to fail in it and to be unable to go through it—this is the unpleasant element to tests. What is the problem if you face a test, and you pass it successfully? The origin of the word *fitnah* comes from the phrase '*fitnat adh-dhahab*' which means the burning of the gold to purify it. Some gold is mixed with other substances; if we want pure gold, what should we do? We smelt the gold until it is free of all impurities. This is exactly the effect of tests and trials on people. They are put to the test to sort the good from the bad. Allah *the Almighty* thus tested Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* just as He tested his father Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* before him at the sanctuary.

Allah *the Exalted* then says: '... and placed on his throne (*kursi*) a body (*jasad*) ...' (*Sad*: 34). The word *kursi* refers to the throne that a king sits on, while the word *jasad* refers to the *qalib* (mould) of a living being. This exterior form is called a *jasad* when it becomes devoid of a soul.

Scholars hold numerous opinions regarding the interpretation of this verse. Some of them said that our master Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* had another son other than Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*. However, that other son was corrupt, like the case of Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* who also had a bad son. This son planned and executed an overthrow against Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*. He usurped his father's throne and remained the king for a long time. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* willed to reinstate Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) to his throne,

He rendered the body of this wicked son inert and lifeless upon the throne. This way after being a powerful king, who was listened to and obeyed by everyone, he became powerless, even over his own self and body. Soon after this, his people revolted against and killed him. Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* then reassumed his throne.

Some of the scholars said in explanation of this verse that our master Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* had many slave-girls and one night he said, 'Tonight I will visit seventy slave women, each of whom will bear a son who will be a knight, riding his horse in Allah's Cause.'⁽¹⁾ So the matter was all well intentioned and for Allah's sake, except that he forgot to say, 'If Allah so wills.' The result was that only one of them gave birth to a lifeless body unable to move or act. This was because a believer is required to mention Allah's Will first, when he decides to do something in the future, as Allah *the Exalted* instructs by saying: 'And never say of anything, "I shall do such and such thing tomorrow", except [with the saying], "If Allah wills!"...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 24)

For when a person says, 'I will do such-and-such tomorrow', he is determining an action over which one has not the slightest bit of control. You cannot guarantee that you will still be alive to do it. You cannot guarantee that the means or circumstances will not change. Thus, when you state that the matter is dependent upon Allah's Will, you are preserving your dignity and clearing yourself from telling a lie, for you may will something to happen, and Allah wills otherwise.

Perhaps that sovereignty lured Sulaiman (Solomon) and a trace of pride had entered him, for he ruled the worlds of mankind, jinns, animals, and birds. He was obeyed throughout the world around him. This is why he did not say, 'If Allah so wills', and Allah requited him for this.

(1) Narrated by As-Suyuti in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* (vol. 7, p. 182) that Ibn Sa'd said, 'Al-Waqidi narrated to us from Ma'shar, from Al-Maqbari that Sulaiman (Solomon), the son of Dawud (David) *peace be upon them* said, 'Tonight I will visit a hundred of my wives, each of whom will give birth to a knight who will struggle in Allah's Cause', but he did not say, 'if Allah wills.' Had he made the matter conditional on Allah's Will, it would have happened. He visited a hundred wives, but none of them became pregnant except for one who gave birth to a half-formed child.'

Other scholars⁽¹⁾ said that Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* begot a child and that some jinn bore ill will towards his son. They feared that he would do to them as Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* did to them and so they desired to kill his son. To prevent this, Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* raised him above the clouds to nurse from the water therein. It is as though he *peace be upon him* wanted to flee Allah's Decree.

There are other scholars⁽²⁾ who are under the opinion that the body was that of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*. It is Allah's Will that He has given normal human beings control over their limbs. So, when they want to stand, they stand, and when they want to move, they move, without them knowing what is happening in their limbs, muscles, and joints to make them stand and move. It is as though Allah is illustrating this by means of a similitude found in the human's own self to better approximate the truth and help humans attain a deeper understanding of the issues that are dependent upon His Power in light of His saying: '... there is nothing like unto Him...' (*ash-Shura*: 11).

So, if you, O, created being of Allah, do as you want, and your limbs obey you and move merely by willing it, without commanding your body to do anything. Will you, then, regard such ability as too far or difficult for the Creator *the Exalted* Who says: 'Verily, His Command, when He wills a thing, is only that He says to it, "Be!" and it is.' (*Ya Sin*: 82) Indeed, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says to a thing, 'Be!', but you do not say, 'Be!' Allah has not burdened you with it. He has made your limbs obey you without any commands from you. Even were you to command them, they would not respond to you. In

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- (1) *Al-Qurtubi mentioned this opinion in his exegesis (vol. 8, p. 5843) and attributed it to Ash-Sha'bi. The upshot of it was that when a son was born to Sulaiman (Solomon) peace be upon him the devils gathered and said, 'If a son of his lives, we will never be free from the affliction and subjugation we are in. Come, let us kill him or drive him insane.' On learning this, Sulaiman (Solomon) peace be upon him ordered the wind to carry his child up to the clouds. He sought to nourish his son from the clouds out of fear of the harm which the devils might inflict upon him. Allah punished him for his fear of the devils; unawares, the body fell dead upon his throne.*
- (2) *This opinion was mentioned by Al-Qurtubi in his exegesis (vol. 8, p. 5844) without attributing it to anyone. It was also opined that the body was that of Sulaiman (Solomon) himself. He had fallen gravely ill until he became, merely, a body. A sick and emaciated person can be described by saying, 'He looks like a discarded body.'*

fact, they are responding to the Creator *the Most High*. Thus, whenever Allah *the Exalted* wants, He can divest you of this capacity; then, you would want to move your hand, but you would be unable to. This is to show you that this capacity is a gift from Him, not something intrinsic to yourself.

The True Lord, Blessed is He, endowed our master Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* with the ability to control his limbs (just like any normal human being). Then, He *the Most High* increased and extended his capacity to the control of others of his own kind and of different species as well. Allah *the Almighty* granted him control over the whole world; it would be influenced by him and respond to his authority. So, it was a matter of superiority in dominion and control over Allah's forces.

It seems that some of that feeling found its way to Sulaiman's (Solomon's) soul, and the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to alert him to the fact that such power was not intrinsic to him; rather, it was a gift from Him, which He could take away whenever He chose. Then he would not be able to control his own body or control others. Thus, Allah cast him like a corpse on his throne, unable to do anything or issue any command.

Since this blessing was a gift conferred by Allah, Who gave you a kingdom the like of which shall never be granted to anyone after you, then you must maintain a firm grip on His Rope, always turning to the One Who gave you this power.

In this respect, it was related that Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* once rode upon a carpet, and the wind carried him wherever he wished. Suddenly, however, the carpet inclined one way, and it nearly made him fall off. So he ordered it to level out for him, at which the carpet said to him, 'We were commanded to obey you as you obey Allah.'

So Allah tested him because He granted him a kingdom that would not belong to any other being after him. He did not want him to transgress or become proud. Therefore, indeed, Allah speaks the truth when He says: 'No! [But] indeed, man transgresses because he sees himself self-sufficient.' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7)

After all, Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* was a human. The True Lord *the Exalted* wanted to show us that although a human has control over his

own body and can control those around him, and even control species other than his own, yet none of this power is inherent in him, but it is a gift to him. The proof of this was that Allah *the Almighty* deprived him of his dominion in a single moment and cast him like a corpse upon his throne, unable to command or forbid, with no authority over anything.

When Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* understood the situation, he turned and repented, '... then he returned.' (*Sad*: 34) That is, he returned to the state he was in before going through this trial. Or else it could mean that he returned to the body, containing his soul or that he turned to Allah *the Almighty* with repentance and acknowledgment of the cause of this test. Therefore, '...then he returned...' has two possible meanings in this context: he returned and repented, in recognition of the cause, or he returned and repented to the One Who causes all things (Allah).

The word *jasad* (corpse) is used to refer to the external bulk and structure, without a soul in it. Concerning it, Allah *the Exalted* says: 'So, when I have fashioned him completely ...' (*al-Hijr*: 29) this is referring to the body. Allah *the Most High* also says in the story of As-Samiri (the Samaritan): 'So he brought forth for them [out of the fire] a calf, a [mere] body, which had a mooing sound...' (*Ta Ha*: 88). This means the external shape and appearance of a calf, but without a soul.

If someone were to ask if such things could happen to messengers, could they make mistakes and be corrected, then the answer is 'Yes.' It is only blameworthy, however, when one is corrected by someone at his own level. It is not blameworthy to be corrected by someone at a higher level. So, what is the problem if the One correcting Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* was his Lord *the Glorious and Exalted Himself*—and not just anyone? Surely, it was an honour for Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* to be corrected by Allah *the Almighty*. For this reason, when the True Lord *Glorified is He* corrected the judgment of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* He said: 'O Prophet, why do you prohibit [yourself from] what Allah has made lawful for you, seeking the approval of your wives? ...' (*at-Tahrim*: 1) Allah *Glorified is He* also said: 'He frowned and turned away because there came to him the blind man.' (*Abasa*: 1-2) Did Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

feel too proud to be corrected by his Lord? No, never did he feel this way, and the clear proof of this fact is that he was the one who conveyed this correction to us and informed us of it. A person would not tell people something about himself unless there is honour in it for himself.

قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِّنْ بَعْدِي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ ﴿٣٥﴾

He turned to Us and prayed: ‘Lord forgive me! Grant me such power as no one after me will have – You are the Most Generous Provider’ [35] (The Quran, *Sad*: 35)

This noble verse gives us a glimpse into the story of our master Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*. Each glimpse into his life provides a distinct lesson, an admonition and an honourable stance taken by our master Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* in the course of his mission. The first glimpse into his story is of his father Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* when he passed judgment in the case of the crop of a field (into which some sheep strayed by night and grazed). The field with its crop belonged to a certain man, but along came the livestock of another man and ate the former’s crop. The True Lord *the Most High* related the story of the judgment that Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* had passed and what the final judgment was after his son Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* corrected it on the basis of his viewpoint. Then Allah affirmed the soundness of the two judges, saying: ‘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, for [though] We made Sulaiman (Solomon) understand the case [more profoundly], yet We vouchsafed unto both of them sound judgment and knowledge [of right and wrong] ...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 78-79). The words, ‘...had strayed by night and pastured therein ...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 78) mean that the sheep spread out in the field and ate the harvest.

When the case was presented to Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* he judged that the owner of the crop should take possession of the herd. However, on hearing this judgment, Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* rejected it and said, ‘Rather, give the field to the owner of the sheep for him to

cultivate until it is restored to the way it has been before the sheep grazed and give the sheep to the owner of the field for him to benefit from them.' Once the field was good again, it should be given back to its owner, and the sheep should be given back to their owner. It is as though Allah *the Most High* inspired Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* to give this sound judgment to amend that of his father, Dawud (David). See how the sanctity of the word of heaven as it applies itself to the word of the inhabitants of the earth? After this, Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* affirmed the soundness of both judges, saying: '... yet We vouchsafed unto both of them sound judgment and knowledge [of right and wrong] ...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 79).

So, for a definitive authority passing judgment to correct an authority that previously passed judgment is not indicative of a fault in the original. It is just that this one understood some aspects of the case from a certain perspective and judged accordingly, while the other understood the issue from another perceptive and judged in accordance with it. Therefore, we find within the courts a preliminary verdict and then an appeal. Even after these procedures, a judgment can be repealed. Does the appealed ruling disgrace the preliminary verdict or the repeal disgrace the appeal? No, because the higher ruling takes into account certain factors that have been missed by the lower ruling, and thus, there is no problem.

When we examine this story, we find that scholars do not propound for us the grounds upon which Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* based his ruling, nor do they inform us of the grounds of the judgment that Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* pronounced. Having examined this, we say that during the past agriculture did not take place on land that was owned and monopolised by certain people; rather, the earth was a public property. Wherever a person sowed his seeds and the sky watered them until they bore fruit, he could harvest it without having to own the land. In other words, whoever came first would cultivate the land.

Ownership was restricted only to the crop, not to the land. Upon this principle the judgment of our master Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* was formed. So long as the land was not the possession of the farmer the issue revolved around the crop and the herd. As for our master Sulaiman (Solomon)

peace be upon him he saw that the crop represented, as we say, a claim staked on the land, and laying claim to a land makes ownership permissible. So, he affirmed that the owner owned the land and judged that the landowner should take the sheep and benefit from them, while the owner of the sheep should take the land and cultivate it until it returned to its former good state. Then each one should take back his own property. Each of them had his viewpoint and based his judgment upon it. Allah says regarding them both: ‘... yet We vouchsafed unto both of them sound judgment and knowledge [of right and wrong] ...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 79).

The other glimpse we get of the life of our master Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* is the trial that befell him. We said that the origin of the word *fitnah* comes from the melting and burning of a metal to separate the gangue materials and impurities from it so that it becomes purer and harder. The word *fitnah* has been generally applied to any kind of testing that differentiated the good from the bad amongst humanity. So, in this verse it refers to an affliction.

By going deeper into the meaning of *fitnah* (testing), we will find it widespread throughout Allah’s entire creation on earth. Each created being is at once a test for others and tested himself. In plainer words, the poor people are a trial for the rich people, and the rich people are a trial for the poor. A rich person is tested through the poor people; will he selfishly withhold Allah’s Blessings from them or will he give away from what he possesses? Will he treat the poor with contempt because of their poverty or will he respect Allah’s Decree regarding them? Similarly, a poor person is tested by means of the rich people. Will he envy them because of their riches and object to Allah’s Decree that he should be poor, or will he be patient and wish abundance for others. The same applies to the strong and the weak, and the healthy and the sick, the ignorant and the learned, and so on. Thus, each of us is a test to others and is himself tested. What is important, however, is who will be successful in this test.

This is a reality that the True Lord, Blessed is He, has clarified in His saying: ‘... And We have made some of you [people] as trial for others. Will you have patience? ...’ (*al-Furqan*: 20) The scholars say that the word *ba’d* (some) does not specify a certain individual; rather, it refers to equal parts of a whole that are left indistinct, such as in Allah’s saying: ‘... and We have

raised some of them above others in degrees [of rank] that they may make use of one another for service ...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32).

So who has been raised and who has been outranked? Scholars say that each of us is raised in something and outranked in something else. Consequently, all people are equal. You have your field in which you are proficient and excel others, and so your rank is above them in this area. You also have other domains at which you are not good and know nothing about. So others are ranked above you in them since they surpass you in those areas at which you are not good.

This results from the distribution of gifts and blessings amongst creation, for they are all Allah's created beings. None of them is Allah's son or is descended from or has some kind of relationship with Him. The True Lord, Blessed is He, has scattered His Bounties amongst all His slaves, giving them gifts in equal measure. Had Allah caused every human to combine in his person all the virtues and good qualities, people would not need one another. Rather, Allah wants His created beings to join hands and help one another in their daily lives.

The strong need the weak, and the weak need the strong. The learned need the ignorant, and the ignorant need the learned. This is how people are bound together by need, and not superiority.

We previously shed light on this issue through the example of a Pasha or a VIP who returns from his work and finds the plumbing of his house to be blocked and releases an awful stench. He will rush to find a plumber to clear the blockages. He may well get in his car and go directly to the plumber's place of work and implore him to come back with him. In this situation, the plumber is raised above the Pasha.

I remember one time in Mayt Ghamr in Bursa, a cafe named Babah. The workers there were staging a revolt. They said, 'It is not right for the workers to serve others! It is not right that they should clean peoples' shoes!' When they were asked why they said this, they replied, 'Because it is degrading and humiliating.'

We said to them, 'In that case, we will do it for ourselves.' Thus, indeed, we did to show them. We went on strike, and we each bought our very own shoe polish and polished our shoes. After a while, these people came to the café and complained of unemployment and poverty, pleading with the people to return to

the previous set-up. We subsequently discussed this with them, and one of us said to one of them, ‘Tell me, by Allah, when you ask me a question and I answer you, do I make you pay a fee for the answer?’ ‘No,’ he answered. ‘If you knew,’ he replied, ‘how much this answer cost me of my life, effort and diligence, along with the trouble my family went through in my upbringing, you would realise that in those days I was subservient to you as you are now subservient to me. Yet, you have only considered us in our times of rest, while you looked at yourselves in your times of toil. The distribution is equal. Each is subservient to the other. It is not a matter of humiliation but mutual integration in daily life.’

This is why the True Lord says: ‘will you have patience’? (*al-Furqan*: 20) This means will we have patience with our mutual trials of each other? Even messengers *peace and blessings be upon them* were tested by means of disbelievers who would persecute and harm them, and disbelievers were tested by means of messengers *peace be upon them*.

Thus, it is from Allah’s blessings that He distributed His gifts and bounties throughout all creation, and He tells us ‘But those who were favoured would not hand over their provision to those whom their right hands possess so they would be equal to them therein’ (*an-Nahl*: 71).

Now we return to Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and say, ‘Could it be that both prophethood and kingship appealed to Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and he found traces of their love in his heart, so Allah chose to correct his innermost thoughts for him?’ Allah *the Almighty* certainly wants him for greater duties than he was currently involved. This is why he was tested with this, finding himself on his throne like a mere skeleton.

This is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was always well mannered with his Lord and creation. He said, ‘O, Allah, I seek Your Forgiveness from every deed by which I sought Your countenance, but it is mixed up with something done not for you.’⁽¹⁾

(1) This was mentioned by Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbali in his book *Jawami’ Al-’Ulum wa Al-Hukm* on page 27 from the prayer of *Mutrafa* ibn ‘Abdullah. He used to say, ‘O, Allah, I seek Your forgiveness for those things which I have repented to You of but then returned to them. I seek Your forgiveness for those things which I placed upon myself for You but then did not fulfil. I seek Your forgiveness for the things which I claimed were done for the sake of Your Countenance but which became mixed up in my heart with that which You know.’

This means that things can befall the prophets, and they can be afflicted. Yet, who is this affliction from? It is from Allah, the One Who sent them. The test is something to correct the course of the one tested; it is not out of dislike for him, Allah forbid! So, this is why Allah *the Exalted* afflicted Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*. He was preparing him for something greater than being a king of the mundane; his Lord wanted to prepare him for something of the unseen realms (*Al-malakut*).

When Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* returned and repented to his Lord, he said, '... My Lord, forgive me, and bestow upon me a kingdom such as shall not belong to any other after me. Verily, You are the Bestower.' (*Sad*: 35) This means that he repented to his Lord from the illusions that he had. It is as though he said, 'O, Lord, you tested me with kingship and prophethood. This happened to no one before me, and I became deluded by it, so grant me a dominion greater than this that will be appropriate to none after me, and this time I will be faithful and not deceived. O, Lord, give me another chance. Try me.' After Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* made this prayer, his Lord answered him and gave him what he sought.

On account of this, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* respected the prayer of his brother Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*. It has been narrated in a Hadith that a devil manifested itself to Prophet Muhammad while he was praying so as to distract him from his prayer. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* grabbed it and was going to tie it to the pillar in the mosque such that the children of Medina might amuse themselves at its expense, but then he remembered the prayer of his brother Sulaiman (Solomon), '... My Lord, forgive me, and bestow upon me a kingdom such as shall not belong to any other after me....' (*Sad*: 35). Thus, he did not do it out of respect for Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*⁽¹⁾.

(1) *This Hadith was narrated by Muslim in his Sahih (541), in Bab Al-Masajid (chapter 8 Hadith 39), on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him who said that Prophet Muhammad said, 'Indeed an 'ifrit from the jinn started to assault me yesterday to distract me from my prayer. Allah gave me power over him, so I repelled him fiercely. I was going to bind him to the side of one of the pillars of the mosque such that you would all wake up and see him, but then I remembered the words of my brother Sulaiman (Solomon), "O, my Sustainer! Forgive me my sins, and bestow upon me the gift of a kingdom which may not suit anyone after me." So, Allah drove him away in disgrace.'*

The word (*Al-wahhab*) ‘the Bestower’ (*Sad*: 35) is a hyperbole (*sighat al-mubalagha*), and it indicates a great deal of giving. We said previously that *Al-hiba* is a grant that has no recompense. Hence, no one can achieve kingship by means of his own skill or effort but only as a gift from Allah *the Exalted*. It is Allah Who grants dominion, and He did so even to the disbeliever who argued with Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* about his Lord. Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘Have you not considered the one who argued with Ibrahim (Abraham) about his Lord [merely] because Allah had given him kingship?’ (*al-Baqara*: 258) He also says: ‘Say, "O, Allah, Owner of Sovereignty, You give sovereignty to whom You will and You take sovereignty away from whom You will"' (*Al-Imran*: 26).

فَسَخَرْنَا لَهُ الرِّيحَ تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ رُخَاءً حَيْثُ أَصَابَ ۝۳۶ وَالشَّيَاطِينَ كُلَّ بَتَاءٍ وَغَوَاصٍ ۝۳۷
وَالْآخَرِينَ مُقَرَّنِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ ۝۳۸ هَذَا عَطَاؤُنَا فَامْنُنْ أَوْ أَمْسِكْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ۝۳۹

**So, We gave him power over the wind, which at his request
ran gently wherever he willed [36] and the jinns, every kind
of builder and diver [37] and others chained in fetters [38]
This is Our gift, so give or withhold as you wish without
account [39] (The Quran, *Sad*: 36-39)**

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘So, We gave him power over the wind...’ (*Sad*: 36); the subjugation of the wind to Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* was the first power that was added to his previous dominion. The word (*rukha'a*) ‘gently’ (*Sad*: 36) means softly and delicately, like a horse that carries its rider smoothly without jerking him or causing him to fall. Some of the scholars, however, said that the word ‘gently’ in this verse contradicts with the concept of ‘... the stormy wind ...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 81). To this we say that it was indeed stormy, but that was in another situation. The word *rih* (wind) has several different uses in the story. If the wind bore him in leisure, then it was soft and gentle, and if it was carrying things for him, then it was vigorous. Thus, it is used to describe different things.

We have said previously that if the word *rih* comes like this in the singular, then it is indicative of punishment as in the verses that describe the punishment of the tribe of 'Ad, where Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And in 'Ad [was a sign],

when We sent against them the barren wind, it left nothing of what it came upon but that it made it like disintegrated ruins' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 41-42). If it comes in the plural, however, it depicts bearing goodness, like when Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And We have sent the fertilising winds and sent down water from the sky and given you drink from it' (*al-Hijr*: 22).

It is well known that air pressure is what keeps things in equilibrium. So, if we vacuumed all the air from one side of a building, for example, it would collapse in the same direction because air pressure is what supports it and keeps it in equilibrium. If Allah *the Almighty* decides to destroy something by means of the wind, then He causes it to blow from one direction. It is as though the True Lord *Glorified is He* is saying that the wind should only bring adversity and punishment, but He subjugated it to Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* such that in his hands it brought only good: 'So, We gave him power over the wind, which at his request ran gently wherever he willed...' (*Sad*: 36).

Allah's saying, '... wherever he willed' means that wherever he wanted it to go it went. This means that Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* would address the wind, which speaks no language. Nevertheless, Allah *the Exalted* made it understand. It is as though he was the commander, and the wind was his subject. The True Lord gave each species its own language through which it could communicate. If Allah causes a human to understand one of these languages, he would indeed understand it and could address any species with it. Another example of this is when Sulaiman said, 'O, people, we have been taught the language of birds' (*an-Naml*: 16).

We were once told about the crocodiles of the Upper Nile and of the symbiosis between them and the birds that feed on the remnants left between their teeth. The crocodile, after eating its food, comes ashore and opens its mouth. The birds then come and pick the remnants from between the crocodile's teeth to clean them. If the birds sense the presence of hunters, they would make a special noise that crocodiles recognise. Upon hearing it, a crocodile would immediately take to the water to save itself from the hunters. This is how crocodiles support the survival of birds, and birds support the survival of crocodiles. So, ponder how such ample exchange of benefit is present in the world of birds and animals.

Nobody can reach the level of understanding animals or the birds except someone to whom Allah has given this ability. Allah *the Most High* gave this special gift to Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and thus he understood the birds and the ants. Allah tells us that when Sulaiman (Solomon) and his soldiers came to the Valley of the Ants, one ant said, 'Ants! Go into your homes, in case Sulaiman (Solomon) and his hosts unwittingly crush you.' Sulaiman (Solomon) smiled broadly at its 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.' (*an-Naml*: 18-19) So, Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* understood them and perceived that Allah *the Exalted* had bestowed this blessing upon him and that this called for gratitude.

Similarly, he understood the hoopoe, spoke to it and had a conversation with it. The story of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and the hoopoe shows us that anyone who takes responsibility for a matter must follow it up closely to be able to tell the attentive from the inattentive.

Had Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* not been checking for the hoopoe, he would not have realised that it was not present. He wondered where the hoopoe was. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and he took attendance of the birds and said, "Why do I not see the hoopoe, or is he amongst the absent?"' (*an-Naml*: 20) This indicates that he thought the hoopoe was maybe present, but he could not see it. This is why he 'wondered' if the hoopoe was absent because he had looked but did not find it. Then, the hoopoe came, and Allah narrates his story: 'But the hoopoe stayed not long and said, "I have encompassed [in knowledge] that which you have not encompassed, and I have come to you from Sheba with certain news. Indeed, I found [there] a woman ruling them, and she has been given of all things, and she has a great throne."' (*an-Naml*: 22-23)

The thing that bothered it was that the Queen and her people were worshipping the sun instead of Allah *the Most High*. The hoopoe said, '...and Satan has made their deeds pleasing to them and averted them from [His] Way, so they are not guided.' (*an-Naml*: 24)

This glimpse of the story teaches us that when you assign someone to some duty, you must not turn away from this person when he consults with him;

rather, you should hear his side, respect his opinion, and not bear down on him. We also learn that the hoopoe was aware of the cause of monotheism and faith.

The hoopoe teaches us that every person must preserve his means of subsistence and keep them always in mind if he wants to live a noble life, that is, because one's means of subsistence are a priority, before setting goals and planning. We understand this from the hoopoe's questions when he wondered '[And] so they do not prostrate to Allah Who brings forth what is hidden within the heavens and the earth and knows what you conceal and what you declare.' (*an-Naml*: 25) However, why does he specify *Al-khab'* – (what is hidden or concealed), which means things that are hidden under the earth? Scholars say it is because the majority of the hoopoe's food comes from under the ground. This is why Allah gave it a long beak, so it can peck the earth and extract its food.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says, 'and the jinns, every kind of builder and diver' (*Sad*: 37) which means we also subjected jinns to him. Of these are the 'builders' who populate the land and work and strive thereon, and of them are the 'divers' who work in the sea and extract its treasures. Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...and others ...' (*Sad*: 38), which refers to the jinns '... chained in fetters.' (*Sad*: 38) This means that they were tied and shackled with chains. The word *asfad* (fetters) is the plural of *safd*, and it means a chain. So, these ones in chains are not free like the builders and the divers. However, why has Allah *the Exalted* kept these ones chained up and left others free? Scholars say it is because there are obedient and righteous jinns, and there are disobedient ones who refuse Allah's Way. The ones who were bound in chains could also be those who rebelled against Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*. Thus, it seems that the righteous ones served him by virtue of their faith, and the wicked ones served him by virtue of their fetters and chains; the former was out of desire, and the latter was out of fear.

Then Allah says, '(And We told him,) "This is Our gift ..."' (*Sad*: 39), and this gift fits the request Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* made when he asked Allah for a dominion that would not be fitting to any other than him. He said, '...Verily, You are the Bestower!' (*Sad*: 35), and Allah *Glorified is He* answered him by saying, '... This is Our gift ...' (*Sad*: 39); given that We have granted you this, We will have you do with it as you will, for We trust you:

‘... so give or withhold as you wish without account!’ (*Sad*: 39) This means that you are free to give or withhold.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* only granted Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* free reign because he trusted him to be just and righteous since he did promise Allah to be just and righteous when he asked Him for this gift. It is related that he used only to eat the grits and bran of the grains and leave the best part for the public and slaves. Hence, it turned out he did not seek this broad dominion and blessing so that he might indulge or boast thereof. He did so only so that he could put it into the service of Allah's Cause and because he was destined to face the greatest power of that time. It is sufficient that Allah *the Exalted* described this power as having a magnificent throne.

In this confrontation the value of dominion and power becomes manifest. When Bilqis tried to tempt him with wealth, he rebuked her for offering him wealth and said, ‘Do you provide me with wealth? But what Allah has given me is better than what He has given you. Rather, it is you who rejoice in your gift.’ (*an-Naml*: 36)

This is where the wisdom manifests; when Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* sought a dominion that would not be fitting to anyone who would come after him, he sought it so that no one may be more distinguished than him and so that no one would try to tempt, bribe or otherwise make him incline to wealth as Bilqis tried with her vast kingdom in the highlands of Yemen during those times.

What shows the shrewdness of Bilqis in this situation is that she consulted with the nobles and wisest of her people who were her counsellors. She said, ‘O, eminent ones, indeed, to me has been delivered a noble letter. Indeed, it is from Sulaiman (Solomon), and indeed, it reads: "In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful."' (*an-Naml*: 29-30)

We may first ask, ‘How did she know it was a "gracious letter"?' Scholars say that she referred to it as such because she found it on her pillow without it being brought by a messenger or anyone, nor did anyone seek permission to see her and was refused by the guards. This is how she knew it came from a higher authority. The affair of the letter's owner must necessarily be elevated above hers since the letter reached her by such means. This is why she consulted her people. She said, ‘O, eminent ones, advise me in my affair. I

would not decide a matter except when you are present with me [to advise].’ (*an-Naml*: 32) The story ends up with her saying that she has wronged herself, and so she decided to devote herself, with Sulaiman (Solomon), to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. Allah says: ‘and I [Bilqis] submit with Sulaiman (Solomon) to Allah, Lord of the worlds.’ (*an-Naml*: 44)

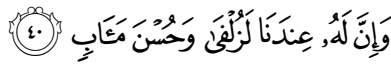
So, Allah’s saying, ‘...This is Our gift, so give or withhold as you wish without account.’ (*Sad*: 39), shows that His gift to prophets is not for boasting or pride, but a gift to serve Allah's Cause. This is why we see that those who have been granted glimpses of the Unseen do not use their knowledge for personal gain. Perhaps, sometimes miracles appear at their hands or on their tongues, and they do not realise it. They break the laws of nature without even realising it. This is because Allah *the Exalted* gifted them some of his secrets, and they do not seek to use them for raising themselves above others but to increase and deepen their servitude to Allah so that they could be role models for all beings, thus guiding them to the path of the truth.

In this respect, it is related⁽¹⁾ that ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* prayed for rain once when it had ceased to fall and the ground had dried up. He made the weak children, elders, women and even the animals go out as well. It is as though he were saying, ‘O, Lord, if You have withheld the rain from us because of our sins then give us water for the sake of these.’ Despite this, it did not rain, and ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* decided to leave. While he was heading home, he came across a slave standing amongst some boulders raising his hands and gazing toward the heavens. ‘Umar said afterwards, ‘By Allah, he had not put his hands down before the rain began pouring like water from a water skin.’ ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* was surprised at this; how was it that his prayers were not answered and yet this slave’s were! He watched the slave closely until he studied his face, and then he went to the slave trader and said to him, ‘Show me your slaves.’ The slave trader thought that he wanted to buy one and thus showed him the best he had, those with sound postures and fit muscles, but ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* did not give any of these a second glance. The man said to him, ‘By Allah, I only

(1) The story of ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab with the slave during the prayer to Allah to make the rain fall

have this other slave who is tiresome (*kall*) to his master, whatever he is turned to, he brings no good.'

When the said slave came, 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* recognised him and said to him, 'Is it you?' The slave looked at him, raised his eyes to the sky and said, 'O, Allah, even as you have exposed me amongst your created beings, take me without testing me.' Thus, he passed away then and there. This is the state of one upon whom sainthood and miracles manifest. He is not happy with them and he does not want to be made known to the people. He does not desire miracles but is content with the affection that Allah shows to him by means of them.



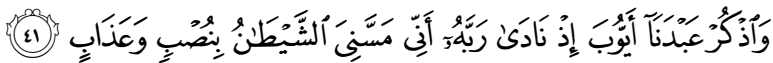
His reward will be nearness to Us, and a good place to return to [40] (The Quran, *Sad*: 40)

The word *zulfa* means nearness or a state of proximity. That Allah gave him a dominion unfitting for any who would come after him, to do with it as he saw fit, is proof of this closeness.

He could give to whomever He willed and hold back from whomever He willed. Allah *Glorified is He* gave him this gift because He knew that Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* would not use it in tyranny or oppression; rather, he would use it in the way that Allah wanted. He was entrusted with Allah's gift.

The phrase, 'and a good place to return to' (*Sad*: 40) refers to an excellent welcome with Allah *the Exalted* on the Day of Judgment.

The sequence of the Quran then takes us to the story of another prophet, Prophet Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him*:



Bring to mind Our servant Job who cried to his Lord, 'Satan has afflicted me with weariness and suffering' [41] (The Quran, *Sad*: 41)

Allah says, 'Bring to mind' (*Sad*: 41), which means remember with praise, 'Our servant Ayyub (Job)' (*Sad*: 41). That Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* is

described in this verse as being a slave is an honour for him, for it is an indication of the affection that the Lord has for His slaves. We said previously that slavery is a hateful word to mankind because the slavery of people is repressive and abusive since the master takes the best fruits of his slave's labour. As for slavery to Allah, it is praiseworthy and beloved because in it the slave gets the best of his Master.

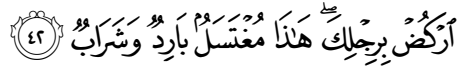
For this reason, Allah *the Exalted* when He bestowed His gift upon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* during the Night Journey, He attributed it to his servitude to Him and said that He transported 'His servant' by night. (*al-Isra':* 1) When the hospitality of the earth got so miserly, particularly after the Ta'if incident, His Lord wanted to show him the hospitality of the heavens! The characteristic that raised Muhammad to this level was the sincerity of his servitude to his Lord.

Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* says, '...Satan has afflicted me with weariness and suffering.' (*Sad:* 41) The word *Al-mass* literally means feather-like, gentle contact. It refers to a lighter degree of contact than that meant by the Arabic word *Al-lams* (touch). Scholars say that he said this because he had fallen very ill with a disease that affected his skin. It is as though *Shaytan* (Satan) was hovering around him insinuating evil thoughts, saying to him, 'How could Allah have done this to you when you are a messenger? How could He leave you like this and not cure you?'

This is how body suffering, pain and *Shaytan's* insinuations were combined against Prophet Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him*. This is why He said, '...weariness and suffering' (*Sad:* 41). The word *nusb* with a *damma* on the letter *nun* is just like the words *nasab* with a *fatha* and *nassab*, and they all mean weariness. Like the words *bukhl* and *bakhal*, both having the same meaning: stinginess.

Scholars say that '*Shaytan's* touch' in reality is an action of Allah's. It is Allah Who 'does' since *Shaytan* and his insinuations are a cause, while Allah is the Creator of causes (the One Who originates causes). '*Shaytan's* touch' (*mass Ash-Shaytan*) refers to his insinuations which occupied Prophet Ayyub's mind. It is as though the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* to wake up to the fact that it was not correct for these insinuations to be in his mind.

When sickness and the insinuations of the *Shaytan* combined afflicted Prophet Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* he weakened and turned to his Lord. He prayed to Him to cut off *Shaytan*'s whispers since warding them off needs a strong power, and his strength was dwindled by his sickness. This is why he prayed to Allah, so that he would not be further weakened by the insinuations of *Shaytan*. When he prayed to Allah, He *the Most High* answered him:



Stamp your foot! Here is cool water for you to wash in and drink [42] (The Quran, *Sad*: 42)

It is as though the True Lord *Glorified is He* is saying to him, 'I am not afflicting you out of dislike for you or to make things difficult for you. I only wish to hear from you that you hate the one who is occupying your mind with something that distances you from Me.' 'Stamp your foot!...' (*Sad*: 42) means that the cure is very easy for Allah. As if Allah *the Almighty* is saying, 'The cure is right at your very feet.' The word *rakd* literally means to thrust with speed and force. One says '*rakadat Al-faras*' which means, 'I spurred the horse with my feet so it would go faster.' The sequence of events then moves from stamping the feet directly to the result: '... Here is cool water for you to wash in and drink!' (*Sad*: 42) Allah did not say, 'so he stamped the ground, and the water came out... etc., He summed it up and sufficed with the command *urkud* (stamp).

The disease which afflicted Prophet Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* appears to have been a skin infection of some kind that caused abscesses to erupt on his skin. Nowadays, we see dermatologists sometimes curing skin diseases with topical ointments that treat the symptoms without curing the real cause of the disease.

It was part of Allah's Mercy to Prophet Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* that He made his ultimate cure both internal and external through a single stamp that released the water wherein he could wash himself with the cool water to treat the external symptoms and drink it to cure the internal causes of the disease.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then goes on to speak of some of His blessings upon Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* His Prophet:

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَذِكْرَىٰ لِأُولَى الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٤٣﴾

And We restored his family to him, with many more like them: a sign of Our mercy and a lesson to all who understand [43] (The Quran, *Sad*: 43)

From Allah's saying, 'We restored his family to him ...' (*Sad*: 43), it appears that some of his family had distanced themselves from him when the illness afflicted him. When Allah cured him, they came back to him. '... with many more like them...' (*Sad*: 43) means that Allah gave him the likes of his family in offspring and followers. '... a sign of Our mercy and a lesson to all who understand.' (*Sad*: 43); the word *dhikra* (sign) refers to a thought that comes to one and turns him towards the object of the reminder, particularly when one is in the process of moving away from that object.

The point of the reminder in this verse is that when he was ill, relief came to him from Allah *the Most High*. His body returned to a state of soundness after it had healed from the disease and its cause. Then his family returned to him and more like them out of concern for his feelings. This is what is meant by Allah's saying: '... a sign of Our mercy ...' (*Sad*: 43). These numerous gifts came as the fruit of his patience and his contentment with Allah's Decree.

So, the reminder that we take from this story is that when difficulties afflict someone, he should turn to Allah and seek refuge with Him from his distress; indeed, who would respond to the distressed or who would remove the illness but Allah? (*an-Naml*: 62)

Allah *Glorified is He* loves to see His slaves seek refuge with Him and that is why He afflicts them. It has been narrated that the angels say, 'O, Lord, Your slave has cried out in prayer to You, and You have not answered him.' So, Allah *the Exalted* replies to them, 'Amongst My slaves are those whose prayers I love. I afflict them so I can hear their voices.'

وَحُذِّ بِيدِكَ ضَعْفًا فَأَضْرِبْ بِهِ وَلَا تَحْنُثْ إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا نَعَمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ ﴿٤٤﴾

‘Take a small bunch of grass in your hand, and strike [her] with that so as not to break your oath.’ We found him patient in adversity; an excellent servant! He, too, always turned to Allah [44] (The Quran, *Sad*: 44)

The word *dighth* refers to a bunch of grass or of date stalks. The phrase, ‘... so as not to break your oath ...’ (*Sad*: 44) shows us that a vow was made that Allah did not want Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* to break. This verse brings us to a story that is narrated in the *Sunnah*. It was⁽¹⁾ said⁽²⁾ that the *Shaytan* went to one of Prophet Ayyub’s (Job’s) wives and said to her, ‘Ask Ayyub to seek refuge in me, and I will heal him immediately on condition that he says, "Verily, the one who healed me was Shaytan!"' Since she was keen to see him get better, she said to him, ‘By Allah, such-and-such thought came to me.’

Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* said to her, ‘This is *Shaytan*. You listened to him and now you want me to obey him! By Allah, beside Whom there is no other deity, I will whip you 100 times.’ This was the oath that Allah *Glorified is He* did not want Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* to break, so He said to him, ‘Take a small bunch of grass in your hand, and strike (her) with that so as not to break your oath ...’ (*Sad*: 44).

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did something similar to this when a man with a big belly (*ahban*) came to him. The word *ahban* comes from the root *habana*, and it means ‘with a big belly’ or with oedema

(1) It was related by Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his book *Az-Zuhdas* well as ‘Abd ibn Hamid and Ibn Abu Hatim, on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas who said, ‘Once Satan (Iblis) sat in the street with a chest and began dispensing medicines to people. Ayyub’s (Job’s) wife said to him, "O, slave of Allah, there is someone here who is afflicted with such-and-such. Can you give him some medicine?" "Yes," he replied, "on the condition that if I cure him he says to me, 'You cured me.' I do not want any reward from him other than this." She went to Ayyub (Job) and told him of this, to which he said, "Woe to you! That was Iblis. By Allah, it is upon me to lash you a hundred times if Allah cures me." When Allah cured Ayyub (Job), He commanded him to take a bunch of stalks, so He took a raceme with one hundred stalks on it and struck her once with it.’

(2) The story of Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* with Shaytan.

in his stomach. He had committed fornication with a sick and skinny woman, and when he admitted his crime, Prophet Muhammad was afraid that he would die if he performed the prescribed punishment upon him so he ordered them to whip him once with a bunch of hundred date stalks or grass.⁽¹⁾

Allah's saying, '...and strike [her] with that...' (*Sad*: 44) means 'since you have promised to whip her then do it this way: "... so as not to break your oath. We found him patient in adversity..."' (*Sad*: 44). Easing his circumstances was a reward for his patience and his turning to his Lord. Amongst that, Allah *the Almighty* also included any pain that he had to bring down on others since he vowed to whip his wife. So, Allah ordered him to whip her so as not to break his vow, but He reduced the burden so as not to hurt him through his family.

وَأَذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُولَى الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ ﴿٤٥﴾ إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَإِنَّهُمْ عِنْدَنَا لَمِنَ الْمُصْطَفَيْنَ الْأَخْيَارِ ﴿٤٧﴾

Remember Our servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all men of strength and vision [45] We caused them to be devoted to Us through their sincere remembrance of the Final Home [46] With Us they will be among the elect, the truly good [47] (The Quran, *Sad*: 45 - 47)

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Remember (*udhkur*) ...' (*Sad*: 45) which means 'with praise'. He also says: '...Our servants...' (*Sad*: 45); the word '*ibad* (servants) is the plural of '*abd*. We have said before that slavery is hateful amongst men, but slavery to Allah is an honour and a source of dignity.

'... Ibrahim (Abraham) ...' (*Sad*: 45) was the father of the prophets, and Allah *Glorified is He* granted him '...Ishaq (Isaac)...' (*Sad*: 45) after he submitted to His judgment when He commanded him to sacrifice his son Ismail

(1) It is related that Sa'id ibn Sa'd ibn 'Ubada said, 'There was a man amongst our houses who was weak and deformed (*mukhdaj*). He took no notice of the people of the household except for one of the slave-girls with whom he fornicated, even though he was a Muslim. Sa'd raised the matter to the Messenger of Allah who said, "Give him the physical punishment prescribed for him." They said, "O, Messenger of Allah, he is too weak for it. If we lashed him a hundred times, we would kill him." 'Then take a raceme with one hundred stalks on it and strike him once with it, then let him go,' he replied.' It was related by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (5/222) and Ibn Majah in his *Sunnan* (2574).

(Ishmael) *peace be upon him*. ‘...Ya’qub (Jacob) ...’ (*Sad*: 45) was the son of Ishaq (Issac) *peace be upon him*. We have already taken a look at the story of these prophets when we explained Allah’s saying [on the tongue of Ibrahim (Abraham) to his son Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon them*] that he saw in a dream that he was slaying him for sacrifice to Allah, and he asked his advice. (*as-Saffat*: 102) Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* did not want to go ahead with sacrificing his son until he had clarified for him the command that had been directed towards him. Since he cared greatly for him, he did not want to take him unaware because this could have made him hate his father if he did not know the command beyond his father’s action.

He also wanted to share with his son the honour of submitting to Allah *the Exalted* so his son would not be deprived of its rewards. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And when they had both submitted and he put him down upon his forehead’ (*as-Saffat*: 103), and then Ibrahim (Abraham) laid Ismail (Ishmael) down on his face, and at this Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘We called to him, "O, Ibrahim (Abraham), You have fulfilled the vision." Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good’ (*as-Saffat*: 103-105). Both of them have submitted themselves to Allah *the Almighty* so He commanded Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* to lift his hand off his son’s throat, and Allah gave him a ram to sacrifice and conveyed to us the story as a reminder to all coming generations. This is how Allah *the Exalted* rewards the good-doers, as Ibrahim (Abraham) was a true believing servant of Allah. Then in time, Allah *the Almighty* gave him the glad tidings of Ishaq (Issac) *peace be upon him* who would be a prophet and one of the righteous. So, Ishaq (Issac) came, and Ya’qub (Jacob) came after him as a result of Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) submission and obedience to his Lord’s Commandment to sacrifice Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon them*. Allah thus preserved Ismail (Ishmael) and granted Ishaq (Issac) and Ya’qub (Jacob) to Ibrahim (Abraham) from His bounty. For the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not wish to torture people when testing them.

This is why we say that every Muslim has a debt of gratitude to Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. Why is this? This is due to the fact that had this sacrifice actually happened to Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* it would have become a tribulation from Allah for men that they should seek closeness to Allah through sacrificing their own sons. Prophet Ibrahim

(Abraham) *peace be upon him* however because of his faith and submission of the matter to Allah, carried this burden for us and lifted this matter from us. Otherwise, it would have become an obligatory act of worship for every believer who came after him. He spoke the truth, the one who said:

Submit to your Lord in His judgment, with wisdom,

He judges, and so you may be safe and gain advantage.

Remember the friend of Allah, sacrificing his son,

When his Creator said, 'And when they had submitted themselves.'

We learn from this that any event or matter which harms man outwardly, tires him or afflicts him should not be looked at without reference to its doer; rather, we must understand any event within the context of the one who did it and link it to him.

We previously clarified this issue saying that imagine, for example, your son came to you with blood covering his face. The first question you would keep asking him is, 'Who did this to you?'; you would expect him to give you a name. If your son said to you, 'My uncle hit me', you would calm down a bit thinking that maybe he has done something to make his uncle hit him. However, if he gave you the name of a person who is your enemy, you will get furious. Thus, one cannot judge an action except within the context of its doer since depending upon the relationship between the action and its doer the degree of good or evil therein is decided.

As for the phrase (*ulil-aydi wa al-absar*), 'men of strength and vision' (*Sad*: 45), the first part means 'those who have *aydi*'. *Aydi* (hands) is the plural of *yad* (hand), but it can also be used to refer to actions performed by the hand. One might say, 'So-and-so has a hand over me' which means in Arabic that he has done something good for me. Since most actions are undertaken by the hands, thus, acts of charity that are done by the hand are given the name of the limb that performs them. This is why a poet said:

Abounding favours over me, he has done,

Them I could not count, but of them I am one

There is a difference between an act that is accomplished and stands on its own, and another which necessitates a response from another party. When, for example, we want to spend and give, he who has wealth can give by his very hand. As for the one who has nothing, he cannot give anything, but he can advise those who have wealth to give out from it.

Allah *the Almighty* tells us that there is no blame on the weak, the sick or those who have no means to equip themselves, provided that they are sincere towards Allah and His Prophet: 'here is not upon the doers of good any cause [for blame]' (*at-Tawba*: 91).

When you advise someone to give out charity, this action is not of the hand but of the tongue. Nevertheless, because the hand is the instrument by which most actions are done, we attribute all goodness to the hands. Allah *Glorified is He* also reminds us and says: 'Indeed, those who pledge allegiance to you [O, Muhammad] are actually pledging allegiance to Allah. The hand of Allah is over their hands' (*al-Fath*: 10).

If a man finds he has no wealth and is unable to give verbal advice, then Allah *the Exalted* will certainly not prevent him from performing good actions relating to spending. It suffices him to be happy with those who spend and to be pleased by the gifts given to others.

An example⁽¹⁾ of this is the man who was heard praying at the *Ka'ba* and saying, 'O, Allah, You know that I disobey you, yet I love those who obey You.' *Al-Asma'i* heard a man praying at the *Multazam* door saying, 'O, Lord, I know that I disobey you, and I am ashamed to ask of You when I am disobedient, but there is no Allah but You, so to whom should I go?' *Al-Asma'i* said to him, 'You there! Indeed, your Lord has forgiven you because you have placed your request in a befitting manner.'

It is well known that a believer should put great effort into his supplications, especially at the *Multazam* door, and should try to make his supplications and requests befitting to this honourable place.

Another level that Allah *the Exalted* has provided for the one who has nothing to give, to not be deprived of the reward of giving, is to be sad about

(1) The story of *Al-Asma'i* with the man who was praying at the door of the *Ka'ba*

having nothing to spend. Allah *the Almighty* says that there is no blame to those⁽¹⁾ who, when they came to the Prophet seeking mounts, were told by him, 'I cannot find any mounts for you', so they turned away, their eyes overflowing with tears out of sorrow that they had no means to spend on the mounts to be able to accompany the prophet in his battle' (*at-Tawba*: 92). Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not deprive a believer of having a share in spending, even if he had nothing.

Amongst the other meanings of the word *yad* is 'strength' as when Allah says that His Hand is over their hands. Thus, the meaning of *ulil-aydi* is 'those endowed with strength' which means those strong in their obedience to Allah.

Wa Al-absar (and vision) refers to insight in faith, wisdom and knowledge. As for the vision relevant to the sense of sight, both believers and disbelievers have it. So, in this verse, *absar* means seeing and beyond, insight upon insight.

Sight on its own is not enough because Allah's signs in creation are a 'given' factor as we say in mathematics. These signs need penetrating insight to be able to reach the objective, which believes in the One Who granted us these givens.

When eyes look at the universe and see Allah's signs within it, but then neither intellect nor feelings are engaged nor do they lead to realising the Designer and Creator, then there is no value in these eyes. Thus, *absar* in this verse refers to those who have inner sight that has engaged their intellect and feelings with the signs they see and those who know that this universe could only be attributable to a manifest, capable and dominating power that has no likeness unto him. Had there been a partner, his effect would have manifested,

(1) Muhammad ibn Ka'b Al-Qurtubi said, 'They were seven of them: Salim ibn 'Awf of Banu 'Amr ibn 'Awf, Harmi Ibn 'Amr of Banu Waqif, 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn Ka'b and Yakni Abu Layla of Banu Mazin ibn Najjar, Fadlullah of Banu Al-Mu'alla and 'Amr ibn 'Utba and 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr Al-Muzani of Banu Salama. (Tafsir ibn Kathir 2/381). As-Suyuti mentions in his book *Asbab aN-Nuzul* that Ibn Abu Hatim relates via Al-'Awfi on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas that he said, 'Prophet Muhammad commanded the people to set forth for battle with him. A group of companions came to him, amongst them was 'Abdullah ibn Mu'qal Al-Muzani who said, "O, Messenger of Allah, carry us with you." "By Allah," he replied, "I find nothing on which to carry you." So, they turned away and wept. It was hard for them to be held back from the jihad, and they had neither transport nor money. So, Allah revealed regarding them the verse: "Nor there is blame on those who, when they came to you [O, Prophet] with the request to provide them with mounts ..." (*at-Tawba*: 92).

and he would have defended his rights to sovereignty. So long as this opponent does not manifest, and no one claims to have created anything, then it is simply a matter of submitting to the One Who claims it.

This is why Allah says: '[O, Muhammad], "If there had been with Him [other] gods, as they say, then they [each] would have sought a way to the Owner of the Throne."' (*al-Isra'*: 42)

Allah *the Almighty* mentions the hands before the eyes because the work of the hands is the outcome of vision. One sees Allah's signs in creation and realises that He is the Lord of all, the Creator of all and the Provider of all. The result of this is that our hearts soften towards the needy, and we give charity to them because maybe one day we will be in their same position and need someone to give us. We do not envy the rich when we are needy because the goodness of the rich will return to us anyway.

This is why Allah *the Exalted* commands those who would fear for the future of their own helpless children and says: 'and let those [executors and guardians] fear [injustice] as if they [themselves] had left weak offspring behind and feared for them. So let them fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice' (*an-Nisa'*: 9). Allah *Glorified is He* also tells us of the orphans whose father was a righteous man and says: 'and their father had been righteous' (*al-Kahf*: 82).

Allah then says, 'We caused them to be devoted to us' (*Sad*: 46). *Akhlashum* means 'what We gave them was purely for them'. This thing that they have been given is something which constantly turns their minds towards the Hereafter, the abode of recompense. By means of this remembrance, a person remains constantly aware of the reward of obedience and the recompense of disobedience, and since he keeps these outcomes in mind, he becomes obedient and distances himself from disobedience.

This is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said in clarifying this issue, 'When the fornicator is committing fornication, he is not a believer! When the thief is stealing, he is not a believer! When the drunkard is drinking, he is not a believer!'⁽¹⁾

(1) This Hadith is agreed upon by Al-Bukhari and Muslim. Al-Bukhari relates it in his *Sahih* (2475) and Muslim in his *Sahih* (57) in the chapter *Kitab Al-Iman* on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him.

Why did He negate belief for these cases? The scholars say that it is because they are heedless of the outcome of their actions and heedless of the recompense. Heedlessness makes us lazy about the acts of obedience, makes us fall into disobedience, and deludes us. If men were always mindful of the recompense of disobedience, they would not fall into it.

We have previously given a parable for this: imagine a young man with an evil lust, and we told him that we will give him what he wants, but when the night is over, we will take him to a burning oven and put him inside it for one hour. What do you think this young man will do? Of course, he will abstain from his sin and flee from it. Why is this so? This is due to him seeing the consequences and visualising the punishment!

Similar to this is the student who studies hard, to the extent that he forgets to eat or drink. Why does he do this? This is due to him thinking of the sweetness of success, the nobility of excellence and the high status he will have amongst his family and friends. Contrary to the negligent student, he acts so because he is heedless of the consequences of his neglect and the humiliation of failure once the results come out.

The phrase *dhikra ad-dar* (the remembrance of the final Home) means he remembers it constantly; he bears in mind the reward for obedience and embarks upon it, along with bearing in mind the punishment for sin and fleeing from it.

Allah's saying, '...With Us, they will be amongst the elect, the truly good' (*Sad*: 47) means they are of those whom Allah has chosen. Allah *the Most High* selects from amongst His creation; He selects particular times and particular places as He wills. Amongst the places He selected are the *Ka'ba* and *Bayt Al-Maqdis*; amongst the times He selected Ramadan; amongst mankind He selected the messengers, and amongst the angels He selected messengers. This selection is not out of favouritism for the one chosen; rather, it is a trust placed upon the one chosen to spread goodness amongst his kind. Messengers are not selected out of indulgence; rather, it is a great burden pertaining to themselves, their families, and their wealth.

Similarly, selecting *Ramadan* is not just for obeying and worshipping Allah during *Ramadan* but for spreading obedience throughout all our times; after all, we take from *Ramadan* the energy needed for the whole year. Thus,

selecting times, places, people, or angels are not for fun but for spreading goodness throughout all of the creation.

The word (*Al-akhyar*) ‘the truly good’ (*Sad*: 47) is the plural of *khayyir*, and it means that Allah chose them because of the goodness in them. This is what qualified them for the selection.

وَأَذْكُرْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ وَكُلٌّ مِنَ الْأَخْيَارِ ﴿٤٨﴾

**And remember Our servants Ishmael, Elisha,
and Dhul-Kifl, each of them truly good [48]
(The Quran, *Sad*: 48)**

Prophet Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* is well known to us through his story with his father, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon them*. The difference of opinion amongst scholars here surrounds Prophet Dhul-Kifl (Ezekiel) *peace be upon him* because there are some people whom Allah mentioned in the context of the messengers, yet He mentioned only their names and descriptions. In this verse, Dhul-Kifl (Ezekiel) *peace be upon him* is mentioned with this description: ‘With Us, they will be amongst the elect, the truly good.’ (*Sad*: 47)

Elyas (Elijah) *peace be upon him* is unknown to us except in name. The Quran does not tell us who he was or when or to whom he was sent, and there is no mention of the teachings he brought. Similarly, the Quran mentions only Dhul-Kifl (Ezekiel) and describes him in this verse as being of ‘the elect, the truly good’. In the chapter of *al-Anbiya*, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘and [mention] Ismail (Ishmael) and Idris (Enoch) and Dhul-Kifl (Ezekiel); all were of the patient’ (*al-Anbiya*: 85-86).

He is described once as being ‘from the truly righteous’, once as ‘from the steadfast’ and once as ‘from the truly good, and for this Allah admitted him into the domain of His Mercy. It is because of this that the scholars have differed about him; was he a messenger or not? The majority of scholars⁽¹⁾ say that he was, the proof being that Allah included him amongst these other messengers.

(1) Some scholars believed that he was not a prophet but one of the righteous men of the children of Israel. Ibn Kathir considered the evidence for his being a prophet to be stronger because Allah associated him with the prophets. He said in the chapter of *al-Anbiya*: ‘And=

Amongst the things that are said of Dhul-Kifl (Ezekiel)⁽¹⁾ is that he lived in the time of Elyas (Elijah) *peace be upon him* and was one of his followers. Elyas (Elijah) *peace be upon him* desired to appoint someone as his successor and wanted to see, in the last days of his life, how this person would act around the people. Elyas (Elijah) was so devoted to the cause of Allah, that when he no longer had the strength to fulfil his role, he wanted to test the person he would choose and see what he would do. So, he sat amongst his people and asked, 'Who will accept three things from me (*'man yataqabbal minni bi thalath'*)?' The letter *bi* usually precedes a price, as when one says, 'I bought such-and-such for such-and-such (*ishtaraytu kadha bi kadha*).' So, his question means that whoever takes responsibility for three things I will appoint him as my successor. Then he said, counting these three things: '... he fasts during the day, stands in vigil prayer during the night, and does not lose his temper.' A man of unremarkable countenance stood up and said, 'Me.'

So, Elyas (Elijah) asked him, 'You will fast the day, stand in prayer at night and will not lose your temper?' 'Yes,' he answered, but Elyas (Elijah) still rejected him. The next day Elyas (Elijah) *peace be upon him* sat in his gathering and made the same proposition to the people. The same man stood up and said, 'Me.' So, Elyas (Elijah) knew that the man had conviction and was resolved to carry out this duty so he appointed him as his successor over the people.⁽²⁾

The scholars have discussed these three conditions that Prophet Elyas (Elijah) *peace be upon him* instituted as tenets for appointing a successor. They

= remember Ismail (Ishmael), Idris (Enoch), and Dhul-Kifl (Ezekiel); they were all steadfast. We admitted them to Our Mercy. They were truly righteous.' (*al-Anbiya*': 85-86) Ibn Kathir said in *Al-Bidaya wa An-Nihaya* (1/227), 'It seems obvious from his being mentioned and praised in the Gracious Quran alongside prophets that he is a prophet may his Lord send peace and blessings upon him. This is the well-known position (*Al-mashhur*).

- (1) The story of Elyas (Elijah) and Dhul-Kifl (Ezekiel) *peace be upon them* when Elyas (Elijah) wanted someone to succeed him.
- (2) As-Suyuti relates this hadith about the prophets of Allah Elyas (Elijah) and Dhul-Kifl (Ezekiel) *peace be upon them* in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* (5/661) and ascribes it to *ibn Jarir* and *Ibn Abu Hatim* on the authority of *Mujahid* (5/663). He also ascribes it to 'Abd ibn Hamid and Ibn Abu Ad-Dunya in *Dhamm Al-Ghadab* and to *Ibn Jarir*, *Ibn Mundhir* and *Ibn Abu Hatim* on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn Al-Harith (5/663). *Kitab Al-Qudahhe* ascribes it to *Ibn Sa'id An-Naqqash* on the authority of *Ibn 'Abbas*.

said that the one who fasts by day refrains from that which Allah *the Most High* has made lawful when not fasting, and by means of this, he has insured to keep his distance from the unlawful. The one who prays at night has abandoned rest and comfort so as to get closer to his Lord, and so he would not take up such a position for luxury or comfort but to fulfil its charges. Had he desired comfort, he would have slept to his heart's content.

As for controlling temper, it is a trait that must be present in whoever would lead his charge or take part in judging between people. It is obvious that the masses are diverse regarding their character and traits, so it is necessary for anyone who is taking responsibility for them to be forbearing and hard to anger. This is because anger clouds the intellect and hinders the natural process to the right choices or right judgments. This is why a judge is told 'restrain yourself' when he gets angry, i.e. because no one is fit for the position of judgment when he is angry.

Thus, he requested someone in control of his temper because anger impedes rationality, aptitude, and impartiality which will result in unsound judgments.

Scholars say of Dhul-Kifl's (Ezekiel's) pledge not to lose his temper that Shaytan was unable to make any progress regarding his fasting during the day or his praying at night so he decided to make him angry. He sent some of his progeny to him to make him angry, but Dhul-Kifl (Ezekiel) *peace be upon him* was unperturbed, so he said to them, 'Leave him to me. I will take care of this matter myself.'

Dhul-Kifl (Ezekiel) *peace be upon him*⁽¹⁾ would sleep only once a day, a short nap, and this would be all the sleep he got by day or night. He would order his servant not to allow anyone to interrupt him during this short time, and this was when Shaytan (Satan) lay in wait for him. He knocked on Dhul-Kifl's (Ezekiel's) door and made a racket saying, 'I am a man who has been wronged by his people. They did such-and-such to me, and I want you to give me justice.' Dhul-Kifl (Ezekiel) *peace be upon him* replied, 'Did you not know that this is the time during which I rest. Go and come back at the time when I sit to judge between people, and I will judge your affair.'

(1) The story of Dhul Kifl (Job) with the devil

The next day Shaytan came and did as the day before. When he came on the third day, he found the door locked, but he found his way in to Dhul-Kifl (Ezekiel) *peace be upon him* by means of his secret passage. Scholars say he entered by means of a small window while the guard was distracted and knocked on the door of Dhul-Kifl's (Ezekiel's) bedroom.

When he saw him, he said, 'How did you get in?' At which Shaytan hesitated, so he continued, 'So, it is you then!' (i.e. Shaytan). At this, he replied, 'By Allah, I have schemed so much to get you angry but have been unsuccessful' Then, he (Satan) departed.⁽¹⁾

As for the difference of opinion between the scholars about the prophethood of Dhul-Kifl (Ezekiel) *peace be upon him* I wish to extricate the scholars from their differences by coming to a point upon which we can agree. They say that the word *kifl* is derived from the word *takafful*, as when Allah said that he placed Maryam (Mary) in the care of Zakaryya (Zechariah); *kaffalaha* means a protector and supporter. Those who said he was a messenger sought to prove their case by means of two points: The first is that Allah mentioned him amongst the messengers, and the second is that Elyas (Elijah) appointed him as his successor; the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* accepted this and did not change it. This indicates Allah's consent to the matter, just as He approved the request of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when he asked his Lord to boost him by means of his brother Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* who was better in speaking skills, so Musa (Moses) asked Allah to send him with him as a helper.⁽²⁾

The others say that he was rather just calling people to Allah *the Exalted*. The people were corrupt during his time, and he saw that this corruption could not be removed except by means of a man who was impartial when judging between people and whose verdicts were just. He found himself to have these gifts, so he presented himself to his people as one who would take responsibility for their affairs justly; thus, they elected him. Therefore, in the opinion of these scholars, he was not a messenger but a man who had a methodology similar to those of the messengers.

(1) As-Suyuti relates this story in his book *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* (5/661) on the authority of Mujahid and ascribes it to Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abu Hatim.

(2) The word *Ar-rid'* means a helper and supporter. (Al-Qamus Al-Qawim 1/260).

هَذَا ذِكْرٌ وَإِنَّا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ لَحُسْنُ مَثَابٍ ﴿٤٩﴾ جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ مِّنْ فَتْحَةٍ لَّهُمُ الْأَبْوَابُ ﴿٥٠﴾
مُتَكِّينَ فِيهَا يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِفِكَهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ وَشَرَابٍ ﴿٥١﴾

This is a lesson. The devout will have a good place to return to [49] Gardens of lasting bliss with gates wide open [50] They will be comfortably seated; they will call for abundant fruit and drink [51] (The Quran, *Sad*: 49 - 51)

Allah's saying, 'This' (*Sad*: 49) refers to what was mentioned previously about prophets. The word (*dhikr*) 'is a lesson' (*Sad*: 49) which refers to something to make one remember as when Allah says that if one of the two witnesses should make a mistake, the other one could remind her. (*al-Baqara*: 282) So, Allah says in this verse that He reminds him of the line of messengers and the stances their nations took towards them, how they withstood the stupidity of their people, along with their people's lack of respect for them that included verbal and physical abuse. Allah *the Almighty* reminds Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of this, for he suffered harm from his people, so that he should know that he is not the first of the messengers and that what happened to his brethren, the other messengers, will happen to him. If we are to measure the affliction by the immensity of the message, we will realise that Muhammad's share of hurt was greater than that of all the other messengers.

So, Allah's saying, 'This is a lesson' (*Sad*: 49) comes as a consolation to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings upon him* that he may know that he is not alone in this and that his greatness lies in withstanding the ignorance of his people. This is because when people pretend they do not know their messenger, it indicates that they are benefitting from the prevalent corruption. In this case, the messenger will be an adversary for his people because the more he blocks their corruption, the greater their mockery, harm and enmity towards him will be, and the more they will accuse him of magic, madness, lies, etc.

Such is Allah's Way with anyone who takes up the Message and confronts corruption in the society; he will necessarily find those who will transgress against him and accuse him of falsehood, they will try to discredit him and cast doubts upon his intentions. This is a natural reaction, for it shows that he has impacted their corrupt way of life which indicates the success of his mission.

Allah then says, '... and the devout will have a good place to return to:...' (*Sad*: 49) which means an excellent place on Judgment Day. Thus, this verse is speaking of the Afterlife and the excellent reward that awaits Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In this verse, there are two gifts for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings upon him*:

The first is the consolation from Allah's saying, 'This is a lesson...' (*Sad*: 49); secondly, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... and the devout will have a good place to return to:...' (*Sad*: 49). It is as if Allah is saying that this is a reminder to console him, and more importantly, it is the magnificent reward that awaits him in the Hereafter. The Arabic conjunction *wa* (and) comes to join the two phrases, 'This is a lesson ...' (*Sad*: 49) and '... the devout will have a good place to return to' (*Sad*: 49).

The Arabic word *muttaqun* (pious people) is derived from the root *waqa*, which means to protect an object from any harm that might disrupt it. We use the phrase *ittaqash-shay'* to refer to a person using a cover to protect themselves from an imminent harm.

If we look at this lexical root in the Quran, we will find that Allah *Glorified is He* obligated human beings to have *taqwa* (piety) to ward off evil. He made man responsible for protecting (*yaqi*) himself from any evil that may come his way. This root comes in several forms in the Quran. For instance, Allah *the Almighty* uses the phrase: 'Protect yourselves from (the anger of) Allah (*ittaqu-Allah*).' In other instances, He says, 'Protect yourselves from your Lord (*ittaqu Rabbakum*),' and says: 'Protect yourselves from Me (*ittaquni*).' He also used this word in the phrase, 'Protect yourselves from the Fire (*ittaqu-n-Nar*)', and the phrase, 'Protect yourselves from the captivations of sedition (*ittaqu-l-fitna*).'

These phrases all share a common meaning because, as we have said, Allah *Glorified is He* has attributes of Majesty and attributes of Beauty. The meaning of the phrase, 'Protect yourself from Allah *Glorified is He*' is, 'Place a barrier between yourself and Allah's attributes of Majesty such as the Attribute of Retribution (*Al-Muntaqim*), the Attribute of Dominance (*Al-Qahhar*) and the Attribute of Compulsion (*Al-Jabbar*).'

People who want to deviate from Allah's Way should fear these Divine attributes and restrain themselves from sins. Indeed, we should protect ourselves from Allah's attributes of Majesty, for the Almighty Allah *Glorified is He* is able to strike sinners suddenly, and they would be unable to endure His vengeance.

We can understand the same meaning from the phrase, 'Protect yourself from the Fire.' Certainly, hellfire is one of Allah's forces and an effect of His attributes of Majesty and Power.

The Quran uses the word *taqwa* in one instance without specifying from what we should protect ourselves. In this instance, it indicates the complete and comprehensive nature of *taqwa* (protection), whereby a person should protect himself from Allah's Wrath, whether it be in the form of the fire or the world's tribulations.

The descriptive words (*husn ma'ab*) '... a good place to return to,' (*Sad*: 49) refer to the most pleasant abode prepared for righteous people. Some scholars claimed that this phrase was referring to the souls returning to their matching bodies on the Day of Judgment, but this opinion is baseless. The valid opinion is that the phrase 'a good place to return to' is referring to the reward prepared for believers in paradise. Therefore, these words are referring to the Gardens of Eden.

We can understand this by looking at the story of the beginning of creation. Before Allah *the Almighty* made the universe, He took a covenant from His created beings in a previous phase that is known as *marhalat adh-dharr* (the phase of spirits). Allah *Glorified is He* described that covenant in the following verses, 'And [remember] as your Lord took from the seeds of Adam, from their backs, their offspring and made them bear witness concerning themselves. [Allah asked,] "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, indeed, we bear witness [that You are our Lord]."' (*al-A'raf*: 172)

Allah *Glorified is He* continues: '[That covenant was made so] that you do not say on the Day of the Resurrection, "Surely, we were heedless of this (faith)", and [so] that you do not say, "Surely, it is our ancient fathers who associated others in worship with Allah, and we were [their] subsequent offspring [who were misguided by them and followed polytheism on their

footsteps]. Would You [Allah] punish us for what [previous] wrongdoers performed?" (*al-A'raf*: 173)

Therefore, the natural disposition of faith was rooted in our hearts in our previous lives before this world (*'alam adh-dharr*). In that previous realm, our spirits had testified that Allah *the Exalted* is the Lord, the Creator and the Educator (*Al-Murabbi*) of all things. This means that our final abode will be to Allah *the Most High* where we will be held accountable for all our actions, regarding their concordance with our primordial pledge.

In this world, whoever fulfils the old covenant (*al-'ahd al-qadeem*) and carries it through to the new covenant (*al-'ahd al-jadeed*) will succeed and have a good abode of return in the Hereafter (*husn ma'ab*). On the other hand, there are people who oppress themselves and break the promise that they had pledged during this phase of spirituality. These disbelievers will lose and fail (on the Day of Judgment), and they will have an evil place of return (*ma'ab ash-sharr*) in the Hereafter.

Now, as the phrase, 'a good place to return to', is a general term, Allah *Glorified is He* chose to clarify and explain it to us with more details. He described it as '... gardens of lasting bliss (*jannat 'Adn*) with gates wide open' (*Sad*: 50). The phrase *jannat 'Adn* ('gardens of Eden' or the 'gardens of lasting bliss') is synonymous (lexically, a *badal*) with the phrase *husn ma'ab* (a good place to return to). In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* has affirmed that the 'good place to return to' is *jannat 'Adn* alone, as if no other place can be justly described as a good place of return.

The word *jannat* is the plural of the word *janna* (garden), and it refers to any place with intertwining leaves that shade the underlying passers. This name also means that the garden (*janna*) hides (*tajin*) any person who walks inside it by preventing their need to leave for anything else. This is also the meaning of the word *janna* (garden) in this world. Allah *Glorified is He* said, describing one of the earth's gardens (*jannat*): 'And recite to them the parable of two men, upon one of whom We had bestowed two vineyards (*jannatayn*) of grapes' (*al-Kahf*: 32).

Another example of a *janna* is the garden in which Allah *Glorified is He* tested Prophet Adam's response to Divine commands and prohibitions. Some

people say that Allah placed Prophet Adam *peace be upon him* in heavenly paradise (of the Hereafter) and that He forced him out of these heavenly gardens into this world when he ate from the tree. This opinion is not valid because the first thing that Allah *the Almighty* said about Prophet Adam was: 'Behold, I am about to establish upon Earth one who shall inherit it' (*al-Baqara*: 30). Therefore, Prophet Adam was not created in the heavenly paradise, but here, on earth.

Then, Allah placed Adam in a garden from this world because when you want to train a person for a particular mission, you must take responsibility for their residence and expenses. You have to sustain your trainees with the necessities of life that allow them to concentrate on their training tasks.

Allah *the Almighty* provided this sustenance to Prophet Adam *peace be upon him* in an earthly garden. However, when Prophet Adam forgot Allah's Command and followed the devil, his nature changed, and he was no longer fit to remain in that garden. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'But as soon as the two [Adam and *Hawwa* (Eve)] had tasted [the fruit] of the tree, they became conscious of their nakedness.' (*al-A'raf*: 22)

Consequently, the first time in which Prophet Adam became aware of the concept of exposure and nudity was a result of his disobedience of his Lord's Command. Therefore, if you see the exposure of any faults in this world, you should know that they are the result of transgressions against Allah's creation or abandonment's of His laws.

Due to that sin, the private parts of the body became symbols of shame and nakedness (*'awra*) for Prophet Adam *peace be upon him*. Apparently, these parts were not different from any other part of the body, such as the mouth, for example. They became shameful signs of nakedness because waste products were excreted from them when Prophet Adam ate from the prohibited tree. It appears that his body did not produce waste excrements when he had previously eaten from the lawful trees in accordance with Allah's Commandments. At this point, he was only eating for sustenance and keeping himself alive, just as soldiers are given types of food that leave little waste. However, when Adam disobeyed Allah's Command and ate from the forbidden tree, waste products were eventually formed, and their filthy nature became apparent on the body.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... and they began to cover themselves with pieced-together leaves from the garden' (*al-A'raf*: 22). He wanted to cover this nakedness and hide it momentarily. However, this was to become a necessary practice for mankind onwards. It stayed as a reminder of the sin that could not be removed. Thus, it was through disobedience that the concept of our nakedness was born.

Had Adam *peace be upon him* been aware of Satan's (Shaytan's) whispers, he would not have listened to him or eaten from the tree. However, Satan deceived them by saying, 'Your Lord has but forbidden you [from consuming] this tree lest you two become [as] angels or lest you live forever' (*al-A'raf*: 20). Satan did not sincerely believe that the tree could grant them immortality. In fact, he had previously asked Allah *Glorified is He* to grant him life until the Day of Resurrection, as He narrated in the following verse: '[Satan said,] "Then, O, my Lord, grant me a respite till the Day when all shall be raised from the dead"' (*Sad*: 79). If Satan had really believed that this tree would grant Adam immortality, he would have eaten from it himself. Thus, the Devil was lying, but Prophet Adam *peace be upon him* did not realise it at the time. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And, indeed, long ago did We impose Our commandment on Adam, but he forgot it, and We found no firmness of purpose in him.' (*Ta Ha*: 115)

Why did Adam *peace be upon him* not succeed in his first test? Scholars said that Adam *peace be upon him* was to be the father of all humanity. His offspring were to be of two types. Some of them will be infallible, such as prophets and messengers, while most of mankind will be fallible. Thus, it was appropriate for Adam to represent both of these types concerning his children in his life.

This disobedience happened when his responsibility was being tested. Yet, Adam's early disobedience does not negate the infallibility of prophets because Adam *peace be upon him* was only selected as a prophet after this test. In addition, he repented from that sin and Allah *the Almighty* accepted his atonement, as He *the Most High* says: 'Thereupon Adam received words [of guidance] from his Lord, and He [Allah] accepted his repentance' (*al-Baqara*: 37). Allah *Glorified is He*

also says: 'Thereafter, [however,] his Lord elected him [for His grace], accepted his repentance, and bestowed His guidance upon him' (*Ta Ha*: 122).

Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* selected Adam to be an infallible prophet after that first test he had undergone. The Quranic phrase, 'Thereafter, [however,] his Lord elected him' (*Ta Ha*: 122) indicates a succession of events and a period of time between his disobedience and his election.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'gardens of lasting bliss ('*Adn*)' (*Sad*: 50); this refers to the final reward of the Afterlife. The word '*Adn*' means that these gardens will be an everlasting residence. This is in contrast with the gardens of this world, which can only provide temporary benefit before inevitable loss or destruction.

For instance, these worldly gardens may be struck by drought, as in the Quranic narration regarding the people of the garden, where Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Behold, We [but] try them as We tried the owners of a certain garden who vowed that they would surely harvest its fruit on the morning [without distributing the alms to the poor]. They made no allowance [for the Will of Allah]. Thereupon, a storm [*ta'if*]⁽¹⁾ from your Lord came upon that [garden] while they were asleep, so that by the morning, it became barren and bleak' (*al-Qalam*: 17-20).

Thus, in some cases, disasters may claim gardens of this world. In other cases, the owners of a garden may die and leave it to their heirs. For this reason, Allah *the Exalted* wanted to reassure believers that their heavenly rewards in the Gardens of paradise will be everlasting and unchangeable. Paradise's sustenance will not run out for these believers, nor will believers perish in its gardens.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: '...with gates wide open (*mufattaha*)' (*Sad*: 50). The Arabic word *mufattaha* (wide open) is a passive participle (*ism maf'ul*) that lexically denotes the great intensiveness of any particular action and that the action was performed by an unidentified subject. This means that these doors will be opened to their utmost width by a force that was not identified in the verse.

(1) Allah *Glorified is He* destroyed the garden with a storm. The word *ta'if*, in this verse, refers to an overwhelming punishment. (Al-Qamus Al-Qawim 1/409)

It could be that the guardians of paradise will open these gates when they see the people of the Garden approaching them as a welcoming gesture to believers. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... until they reach it, and its gates are widely opened, and its keepers will say unto them, "Peace be upon you! You have done well. Enter, then, this [Paradise] herein to abide forever."' (*az-Zumar*: 73)

The gates may even open automatically at the sight of incomers, or furthermore, slide at the mere will of every believer who wishes to enter. This may be similar to the sight we currently see in some major hotels, where a doorman opens the gates of the lobby to designated visitors as a sign of hospitality. Furthermore, many hotels have sliding doors that open automatically whenever someone approaches them, and then close automatically after a person enters the building.

This example of prolific advancement of mankind in designing sliding doors increases our recognition of Divine bounties and rewards mentioned in the Quran. Allah *Glorified is He* say regarding another adornment and luxuries: 'And were it not that [with the prospect of boundless riches before them] all people would become one [evil] community, We might indeed have provided for those who [now] disbelieve in the Most Gracious roofs of silver for their houses and [silver] stairways on which they ascend.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 33) We have now seen lavish elevators and escalators that ascend vertically inside buildings. This Quranic description of luxurious buildings was revealed more than fourteen centuries ago amongst an illiterate, Bedouin nation who knew nothing about the abundant crafts of construction as they were living in tents and abodes made of wool and animal fur.

Such verses in the Quran gave us glimpses of the potential constructions of the world of men, and indeed, technological progress will continue to produce remarkable devices. These devices support the Quranic descriptions of paradise after disbelievers had previously found them arduous to believe. If mankind's limited knowledge is able to produce such generous technological implementations, it is more plausible that the Creator of human beings, Allah *the Exalted* can provide more sublime constructions to reward His creation in the Hereafter.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in his description of the people of paradise: '...They will be comfortably seated (*muttaki'in fiha*)' (*Sad*: 51). A *muttaki* is

someone who is in a position between lying and sitting down (*qa'id*), or between lying and sitting up (*jalīs*). There is a difference between sitting down and sitting up, even though they share a common meaning. Sitting down (*qu'ood*) refers to someone who was standing and then sat down, whereas sitting up (*juloos*) refers to someone who was lying and then sat up.

When a man is standing, he carries his whole weight upon his feet. If he gets tired of standing, he may sit down, thereby shifting his weight to his posterior. Then, if he still gets tired of sitting down, he may recline on his side, a position between sitting and lying flat on the ground. In this state, the weight of his body is more evenly distributed and is thus the most restful position for him. This is why Allah *the Almighty* chose this position for the people of paradise.

Zulaykha, the wife of Al-'Aziz chose this resting state for her guests, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and prepared for them a sumptuous repast (*muttaka'a*)' (*Yusuf*: 31). The Arabic word *muttaka'* indicates that the gathering was not in a bored state. The reclining position is the most comfortable resting position for a person.

Allah *Glorified is He* says of the people of paradise: '...reclining upon carpets lined with rich brocade,⁽¹⁾ and the fruit of both these gardens will be within easy reach' (*ar-Rahman*: 54). He also says in the chapter of *ar-Rahman*: '... reclining upon green foldings (*rafraf*) and carpets ('*abqari*)⁽²⁾ rich in beauty' (*ar-Rahman*: 76).

Allah *Glorified is He* also says in reference to the resting state of the people of Paradise: '... wherein upon couches (*ara'ik*) they will recline' (*al-Kahf*: 31). So, the people of paradise will recline on couches filled with *istabraq* (brocade), which is the thick and heavy form of satin silk. If the stuffing and the inside of the beds will be made of brocade, imagine what their external textures will be made of.

(1) *Al-istabraq* refers to heavy, natural silk embroidery. It is suitable for outdoor clothing and winter because it is warm. (Al-Qamus Al-Qawim 1/18)

(2) '*Abqari*: The Arabs believed that the jinns lived in a place known as 'Abqar because various wondrous stories were attributed to it. It is also said that it is a place in Yemen where embroidered carpets were made and that anything good and well made was attributed to it. (Al-Qamus Al-Qawim 5/2)

The word *rafraf* refers to the folds that we find on curtains. The word *ara'ik* is the plural of the word *areeka*, and it refers to a couch with ornaments and covers that are similar to mosquito nets. The people of paradise will be reclining upon these fabrics.

There must be further comforts in terms of food and drink after believers recline on these lavish couches. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... they will call for abundant fruit and drink' (*Sad*: 51). Therefore, the welcome that is extended to each of them will be of the specific nature that a person desires. Nothing is placed before them that they do not want. Thus, this reception is not obligatory upon everybody since part of the service may not agree with their inclinations.

Allah *the Most High* mentions the fruits first, even though they are a luxury that traditionally comes after a main meal. Scholars said that the presence of fruits or desserts indicates that a main meal is unquestionably present.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and drink' (*Sad*: 51). Scholars said that the drink intended in this verse is grape juice. Fruits and grape juice are mentioned specifically because they were not abundantly present in the environment in which the Quran was revealed. Thus, they were highly valued by the Arabs, whose foods mostly consisted of dates, wheat, and barley. So, Allah *the Almighty* mentions the foods that they desired the most at that time. Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: '... and with fruit of any kind that they may choose and with the meat of any bird that they may desire' (*al-Waqi'a*: 20-21).

In the chapter of *al-Baqara*, Allah *the Exalted* clarifies that the fruits of the Hereafter will only share the names, the colours and the shapes of this world's fruits, but they will have a different and a more sublime taste. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Whenever they are granted fruits as their appointed sustenance, they will say, "We were granted that sustenance in our older days!" However, they will only be given similar fruits with which they will recall that [past sustenance]. And there, shall they have spouses pure, and there, shall they abide [for eternity].' (*al-Baqara*: 25)

So, the fruits of paradise will resemble the fruits we recognise in this world. An apple there will look like an apple here such that a person would say, 'This is like the apples I ate in the (past) world.' However, the reality of

the fruits of paradise will be completely different as these fruits came forth by the pure Power of Allah *the Almighty*.

In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* described the gatherings of the people of paradise. For instance, in describing their divans and couches, He says: '[And in it] there will be beds [of comfort] raised high, cups placed ready, pillows (*namariq*) ranged and carpets (*zarabiyy*) spread out' (*al-Ghashiya*: 13-16). The word *namariq* is the plural form of the word *namraqa*, which is a pillow upon which one rests. The word *zarabiyy* is the plural of the word *zarbiya*, which is a decorated rug. As for drinking vessels, Allah described them in this verse as *akwab*. In other verses in the Quran, He described them as *abareeq* or *ku'oos*. These are all drinking vessels, but each of these words has a slightly different meaning. A *koob* (cup) is the singular form of the plural *akwab*, and this is an empty vessel that has neither an '*urwa* (handle) nor a *khurtoom* (spout). However, if a vessel contains something to drink, it is called a *ka's*. If a cup has a handle or a spout, it is called an *ibreeq* (which is the singular form of the plural *abareeq*).

One of the habits of the Arabs was allowing a small quantity of liquid to remain in their cups after drinking, which they would proceed to pour on the ground. The drinker did this to indicate his contentment and lack of greed. A poet⁽¹⁾ spoke of this when he said: 'For the earth has a share of the noble man's cup.'⁽²⁾

Another Arabic tradition was that they used to avoid filling any cup to its top rim. This allowed them to see the fluid level more clearly, so that they can distinguish between an empty cup and a cup that is full of drink. This also indicated the clearness of the liquid and the cleanliness of the utensil.

(1) The poet is 'Abd Al-Ghani An-Nabulsi. He was a scholar of Islam and literature and was a Sufi. He was born in Damascus in 1641 CE and grew up there. Then, he travelled to Baghdad, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt and the Hijaz area. He passed away in Damascus in 1730 CE at the age of 89. He wrote many great works of which *Ta'teer Al-Anam fi Ta'beer Al-Manam* was one.

(2) The full couplet is the following:
 We drank and spilt a mouthful on the ground,
 For the earth has a share of the noble man's cup
 It is from a poem in the *bahr at-tawil* that has three couplets.

A poet once described this concept by saying: 'Were the cup not half-full, one could think that, in the palm of its drinker it stood alone.' He meant to say that if a cup was filled with fluid until its rim, the viewer might think that the cup was empty if they are unable to distinguish the liquid's meniscus from the cup's rim.

A few years ago, we also had a noble tradition related to food in our country. We used to eat a light meal called *tabaq al-karama* (the plate of dignity) in our own homes before attending a feast at another person's house. The feast's guests did that in order to avoid a strong appetite before approaching the host's food. This allowed them to enjoy the feast with a higher degree of decorum.

We can now return back to the verse we are studying. After the blessings of reclining, eating, and drinking, a person's mind will naturally turn to the concealed company of a beautiful mate. This is what Allah *the Exalted* promises righteous people in the following verse.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَعِنْدَهُمْ قَصِيرَاتُ الْطَّرْفِ أَنْرَابُ ﴿٥٢﴾ هَذَا مَا تُوعَدُونَ لِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٥٣﴾
 إِنَّ هَذَا لَرْزُقُنَا مَا لَهُ مِنْ نَفَادٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

They will have well-matched [wives] with modest gaze [52]

'This is what you are promised for the Day of Reckoning [53]

Our provision for you will never end [54] (The Quran, *Sad*: 52-54)

The words '... mates with a modest gaze,' mean that each one of them only gazes at her designated companion. This also means that no other man will desire the companion of his brother because each female companion only desires her own mate.

We know that, in this respect, indeed, the eye and the glance have an unambiguous effect as they have a speech and a language of their own. An example of this is what Allah *Glorified is He* says in the story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*: '... And when the women saw him, they were greatly amazed at his beauty, and [so flustered were they that] they cut their hands [with their knives], exclaiming, "Allah save us! This is no mortal man!

This is nought but a noble angel.'" (*Yusuf*: 31) Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) said, 'O, my Lord! Prison is more desirable to me than [compliance with] what these women invite me to do, for, unless You turn away their guile from me, I might yet yield to their allure and become one of those who are unaware [of right and wrong].' (*Yusuf*: 33) The first verse described the plan of one woman, the wife of Al-'Aziz, to lure Prophet Yusuf (Joseph). Then, why did Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) use the words 'what these women invite me to do' as well as 'their guile' and 'I might yet yield to their allure' (*Yusuf*: 33) all in the plural form? These women must have all looked at him in an alluring way, and he understood that each one of them desired him.

Thus, the glance has a language that carries meanings and expresses the soul of its owner. This is why Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) referred to the group of women, and not to the wife of Al-'Aziz alone, although she was the chief plotter. Additionally, years later, when her husband, Al-'Aziz, wanted to summon Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) from prison, Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) said, 'Ask him [first to find out the truth] about those women who cut their hands.' (*Yusuf*: 50)

There are other stories of the language of the eyes in Arabic literature. This includes the story of Abu Dulama⁽¹⁾ when he entered the court of the caliph⁽²⁾ who was surrounded by his notables. The caliph wanted to tease Abu Dulama, so he jokingly said to him, 'O, Abu Dulama. You have to ridicule one of us, or I will have you killed.'

All the people present were looking at Abu Dulama, each one saying with his gaze, 'Do not lampoon me, and I will give you whatever you wish.' Some

(1) Abu Dulama was Zand Ibn Al-Jawn Al-Asadi. He was a talented poet, given to light-heartedness and joviality. He was dark, heavily built and handsome. His father was a slave to a man from the Asad tribe, and the man freed him. He grew up in Kufa and attached himself to the caliphs of Banu Al-'Abbas. They liked him and would shower him with gifts, and he praised some of them in poetry. He was accused of heresy because of his impudence, and there are many differing tales about him. He died in the year 161 AH.

(2) He was the Caliph al-Mahdi Al-'Abbasi, Muhammad Ibn `Abdullah Abu `Abdullah Al-Mahdi Billah. He was born in 127 AH and died in 169 AH at the age of 42. He was a caliph for 10 years, led a praiseworthy life, and was of seemly appearance and character. He was generous and built Jami' Ar-Rasafa. This was mentioned in *Al-A'lam* by Az-Zirikli.

of their eyes pleaded with him, while others threatened him with their frowns. Eventually, Abu Dulama decided to please all the attendants and lampooned none other but himself, hoping to gain the gifts that awaited him from the notables. Everyone was surprised by him when he said⁽¹⁾:

'Shall I not tell you of Abu Dulama,
He is neither highly born nor dignified.
If he wears a turban, he is a monkey,
And if he takes off his turban, he is a pig.'

The notable people around the caliph generously rewarded Abu Dulama for these verses of poetry, and he became a wealthy man for his quickly thought out verses.

Therefore, the words, '...well-matched mates with a modest gaze' (*Sad*: 52) mean that each of these female companions in paradise will lower her gaze from all people except her man, and this is a desirable characteristic in any woman. Additionally, any generous man may give away anything he owns in his life except his wife. This is because he cannot allow anyone to look at her with any desire. This is a characteristic of the faithful people in this world and in the Hereafter.

Thus, one of the virtues and wondrous aspects of faith was that it dislocated false beliefs from the hearts and inherent choices from the minds. Faith also redirected people's traditional affections. We can see this in the stories of the companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* namely the Emigrants (*Al-muhajireen*) and the Helpers (*Al-ansar*). Faith removed disbelief from their hearts and erased stubbornness from their minds. Then, it overcame the strongest of their emotions, which is the affection of a man towards his wife. A man from the Helpers said to his brother from the Emigrants, who came without his family, 'Look at my two wives. I will divorce whichever you like so that you may marry her.'⁽²⁾ Nevertheless, the Emigrant refused

(1) These two couplets are from a poem in the meter called *bahr al-wafir* that has a total of four couplets. They were mentioned by Abu Al-Faraj Al-Asfahani in *Al-Aghani*, Ibn 'Abd Rabbih in *Al-'Aqd Al-Farid* and An-Nuwayri in *Nihayat Al-'Arab fi Funun Al-Adab*.

(2) *Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him paired the Emigrants with the Helpers as brothers after the Emigration to Medina. It appears that he paired 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn =*

the generous offer and said, 'May Allah bless your family and your wealth. Show me where the marketplace is.' This is the degree to which faith impacted the earliest believers.

Now, we can return to the verse we are studying. Allah *Glorified is He* describes these wives as '... well-matched (*atrab*),' (*Sad*: 52). The word *atrab* could mean that all these women are equal in appearance or age, such that one of them is not distinguished over the other. They are all beautiful, of one age and one stature. This will ensure that each man's eyes will be kept to their own woman and that no one will desire the female companion of another man. If all the women are of one standard appearance, every man will only look to his wife as well. Another meaning of the word *atrab* is that every woman will be appropriate to her man and that she has the ability to take the appearance that he likes.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: 'This is what you are promised for the Day of Reckoning,' (*Sad*: 53). Thus, these are the rewards promised for believers on the Last Day. It was Allah *Glorified is He* Who made that promise, and He is well capable of fulfilling His promises. Indeed, He is the fully Capable (*Al-Qadir*) the Almighty (*Al-'Aziz*) and the Ever-Triumphant (*Al-Ghalib*). There is no power that can object to His wishes and no force that can oppose Him.

As a created being, you may make a promise and intend to fulfil it sincerely. However, you cannot guarantee, with certainty, that your circumstances will allow you to keep your promise. An obstacle may arise and prevent you from

= 'Awf with Sa'd ibn Ar-Rabi' Al-Ansari Allah be pleased with them. Sa'd said to him, 'My brother, I have the most wealth amongst the people of Medina, so look to half my wealth and take it, and I have two wives, so look which of them is most pleasing to you so that I may divorce her for you.' 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf refused the offer and replied to him, 'May Allah bless your family and your wealth. Show me where the market place is.' They showed him where the marketplace was, and he bought, sold, and made a profit, so he thus came back with some butter and cheese. After some time, he came one day wearing clothes dyed with saffron. Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him asked him, 'How are you?' Abd Ar-Rahman replied, 'O, Messenger of Allah. I married a lady.' Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him asked, 'What did you give her as a dowry?' He replied, 'The weight of a date stone in gold.' Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him replied, 'A sheep would have been enough.' 'Abd Ar-Rahman Allah be pleased with him later related, '(I was blessed to the extent that) every time I lifted a rock, I would expect to find some gold or silver underneath it.' This was related by Ibn Sa'd in *At-Tabaqat Al-Kabir* (3/116,117), and Adh-Dhahabi in *Siyar A'lam An-Nubala'* (1/92).

doing so. Indeed, the promises of Allah are not your promises. Allah's promises are true because His Power is unrestrained.

Allah *Glorified is He* said: '... for the Day of Reckoning' (*Sad*: 53). This refers to the reckoning of the pious people because everyone will be held accountable for their actions on the Day of Judgment, including the faithful obedient and the faithless sinful. So, the rewards mentioned in this verse were referring to the reckoning of the faithful people as Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and the devout will have a good place (*husn ma'ab*) to return to' (*Sad*: 49).

Allah *Glorified is He* then said: '...this, verily, shall be Our provision [for you] with no end to it' (*Sad*: 54). Allah *the Exalted* does not say, '... this shall be your provision,' but He says: '... Our provision,' (*Sad*: 54). Indeed, the speech of believers in paradise will constantly confirm the perpetuity of Divine blessings and the truth of Allah's promise.

After Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the righteous and pious people, He then mentions evildoers to illustrate their contrasting destiny.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

هَذَا وَإِلَى الظَّالِمِينَ لَشَرٌّ مَثَابٍ ۖ جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَوْنَهَا فَيَنْسِفُهَا إِلَهُهُمْ ۚ إِنَّهَا
هَذَا فَلْيَذُوقُوهُ حَمِيمٌ وَعَسَاقُ ۖ وَآخِرُ مِنْ شَكْلِهِ ۚ أَزْوَاجٌ

**But the evildoers will have the worst place to return to [55]
Hell to burn in, an evil place to stay [56] all this will be
theirs: let them taste it—a scalding, dark, foul fluid [57]
and other such torments [58] (The Quran, *Sad*: 55 - 58)**

The words, 'All this ...' (*Sad*: 55) refer to the rewards prepared for the pious people in paradise. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... but verily, the most evil of all abodes (*sharra ma'ab*) awaits those who transgress the bounds of what is right' (*Sad*: 55). The Arabic words *sharra ma'ab* means 'the worst destination, place of return and outcome'. The word *ma'ab* in this verse has the same meaning as it had previously. It refers to the return of all people to Allah *Glorified is He* the One Who took the covenant from them and gave them an innate disposition (*fitra*) to believe in Him.

Every child is born with this innate disposition. However, sinful disbelievers did not fulfil the covenant they took upon themselves. Instead, they went against their previous testimony when Allah *the Almighty* had asked them in the primordial phase of spirits, 'Am I not your Lord?' They answered: 'Indeed, we do bear witness thereto!' (*al-A'raf*: 172)

Just as Allah *the Exalted* elucidates 'the most beautiful of abodes' in the previous verses, He elucidates 'the most evil of abodes' in the verses that followed. He says: 'Hellfire they will have to endure,' (*Sad*: 56). They will roast in its fires, '...and how vile a resting place (*al-mihad*) it will be' (*Sad*: 56). The word *Al-mihad* (resting place) refers to the bed of a child that has been set out for him to have peaceful sleep. A child has no part in preparing a resting place since he depends on a guardian to prepare it for him. The case is similar with these transgressors as they will have no say regarding the 'resting place' into which Allah *the Almighty* will cast them. Therefore, the word *Al-mihad* was used in this verse to mock and ridicule disbelievers, as indeed, their abode in the Hellfire is far from a resting place.

'This, then, is prepared for them, so let them taste it, scorching fire (*hameem*) and molten pus (*ghassaaq*)' (*Sad*: 57). Thus, disbelievers will taste the most severe of punishments. The word *hameem* refers to a fire that is at its highest possible temperature, and the word *ghassaaq* refers to the pus that seeps from the burning skins of those inflicted with this punishment. We pray that Allah *Glorified is He* protect us from such a destiny. The Arabic word *ghasaqat* is used to describe the flowing nature of a substance. For instance, Arabs used the words *ghasaqat* 'aynuhu to refer to a person whose tears flowed from his eyes.

The punishment does not end with the *hameem* and *ghassaaq* mentioned in this verse, for there are other forms of punishment that will await them. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... and coupled with it, further [suffering] of a similar nature' (*Sad*: 58). For example, there will be punishments with molten metal (*muhl*). In addition, there will be a tree known as *zaqqum* which produces fruits that resemble the heads of devils. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* has prepared other forms of punishment for transgressors, which He did not

mention in the verse we are studying, but has mentioned them in other verses of the Quran.

After Allah *Glorified is He* gave us this comparison between the reward of pious people and the brutal outcome of evildoers, He illustrated the striking difference between these two groups of people. Indeed, good company assists a person's obedience and good deeds, whereas bad company pulls its friends into evil and draws them into disobedience.

For instance, a student in school is more likely to succeed if a hardworking friend assists his studies. They may revise together and remind each other of the consequences of negligence on the final result. On the other hand, a student is more likely to fail if he joins a turbulent group of friends. Bad company may persuade an outstanding student to skip their studies or lessons, and he may even learn crooked and corrupting habits.

Consequently, at the end of the year, a successful student may find that his good friend was a major cause for his own accomplishment, while a failing student may blame his bad company for many wasted opportunities.

Due to the importance of this concept, Allah *the Exalted* chose to illustrate this matter in the following verses.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

هَذَا فَوْجٌ مُّتَمَجِّعٌ مَّعَكُمْ لَا مَرْجَا بِهِمْ إِنَّهُمْ صَالُوا النَّارِ ﴿٥٩﴾
 قَالُوا بَلْ أَنْتُمْ لَا مَرْجَا بِكُمْ أَنْتُمْ قَدْ مَتَمُّوهُ لَنَا فَيَسَّ الْقَرَارُ ﴿٦٠﴾
 قَالُوا رَبَّنَا مَنْ قَدَّمَ لَنَا هَذَا فَرَدُّهُ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا فِي النَّارِ ﴿٦١﴾

[It will be said], 'Here is another crowd of people rushing headlong to join you.' [The response will be], 'They are not welcome! They will burn in the Fire [59] They will say to them, 'You are not welcome! It was you who brought this on us, an evil place to stay [60] adding, 'Our Lord, give double punishment to those who brought this upon us' [61] (The Quran, *Sad*: 59 - 61)

These verses illustrate one of the main encounters that will occur on the Day of Judgment between two groups of people who were each other's companions

for evil pursuits. One of these groups will be the leading disbelievers, and the other group will be their followers in disbelief. The dialogue itself will be between three groups or parties. These groups will be the angels who guard the fire, the leaders of the disbelievers who will go first into hellfire, and then the followers whom these leaders had misguided in this world.

The angels will direct the first words to the leaders of disbelief who have already been residing in the fire for some time: '[Prepare yourselves as] there is a crowd (*fawj*) [of your followers] who will rush [into the Fire] (*muqtahimmin*) with you [soon]'. (*Sad*: 59) Thus, the angels will alert the people of hellfire that a group of their followers will be joining them. The Arabic word *muqtahim* is used when a person is making a rushing entrance. This means that this late group of disbelievers will enter the fire quickly and forcefully.

Why would people rush as they are entering hellfire? Scholars said that these disbelievers will not be moving by their own free will but, instead, will be forced and pushed into it violently, as Allah *Glorified is He* says elsewhere: '... on the Day when they shall be thrust into the fire with [an irresistible] thrust' (*at-Tur*: 13).

The Arabic word *fawj* (crowd) is used to refer to a group of people, just as we use the words *fawj al-hujjaj* in our reference to a group of pilgrims or *fawj al-musafireen* in our reference to a group of travellers.

When angels inform them of newcomers, the leaders of disbelievers in Hellfire will say, 'There is no welcome (*la marhaban*) for them. Surely, they will be roasting in the Fire [as well]' (*Sad*: 60). The words *la marhaban* (no welcome) mean that there will not be any salutations or greetings for these new residents. Generally, this is the behavioural pattern followed by evil friends. In the end, their friendships easily turn into enmity, and they start cursing each other.

In this example, leaders will curse their followers, and followers will curse their leaders. In this verse, we have leaders saying that their followers are not welcome with them. This is because these followers were not entering hellfire to save their leaders or to lighten the punishment for them. They have only entered the fire to be roasted in its flames as well.

The crowd of disbelieving followers who will hurtle into the fire will respond to their leaders, 'No indeed, it is you who has no welcome. You have prepared it for us' (*Sad*: 60). Indeed, leaders of disbelief had forwarded the messages of misguidance and disbelief to their followers and, thus, brought them to this evil end: '... and how vile a destiny it will be' (*al-Mujadala*: 8).

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'They will say, "Our Lord, doubly increase the torment of the ones who have prepared [this destiny] for us in the Fire' (*Sad*: 61). In another verse, the Quran describes this situation, quoting disbelievers as saying, 'And they will say, "O, our Lord, we obeyed our leaders and our great men, and it is they who have led us astray from the right path! Our Lord, bring them torment twofold and banish them utterly from Your Mercy.'" (*Fatir*: 67-68) They will ask Allah *the Almighty* to increase the punishment of their leaders because their leaders did not go astray alone but led them astray as well. There is a dual nature to their crime, and each of these sins deserves a punishment of its own. Thus, leaders must receive a more brutal punishment than their followers. Indeed, Allah *the Exalted* will not punish his servants with a torment that is more than they deserve.

The words of the followers to their leaders, 'You prepared it for us' (*Sad*: 60), mean that they have lead them through temptation, embellishments and glamorised misguidance. They facilitated disobedience for them.

In another verse in the chapter of *al-Baqara*, Allah *Glorified is He* affirmed that those who were friends in evil will disassociate themselves from one another on that Day. Allah *Glorified is 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], with all their hopes cut to pieces! And then those followers shall say, "Would that we had a second chance [in life], so that we could disown them [our leaders] as they have disowned us!" Thus, will Allah show them their works in a manner that will cause them bitter regrets, but they will not come out of the Fire.' (*al-Baqara*: 166-167)

This situation resembles Satan's disownment of his followers on the Day of Judgment. Satan will say, 'Behold, Allah promised you the true promise! I, too, held out [all manner of] promises to you, but I deceived you. Yet, I had

no power at all over you. I but called you, and you responded to me. Hence, do not blame me, but blame yourselves. It is not for me to respond to your cries, nor for you to respond to mine.' (*Ibrahim*: 22)

Therefore, this is the end of those who are friends in evil actions. Indeed, their friendship will end in enmity and mutual cursing. As for those who are friends in righteousness, they will be associates in this world and in the next.

This is clear in Allah's saying: 'On that Day, all friends (*al-akhilla'*) will be enemies to one another except the righteous [friends]' (*az-Zukhruf*: 67). The word *akhilla'* (friends) is the plural of the word *khaleel*. This *khulla* (friendship) means that they love each other for the sake of Allah *Glorified is He*. They met upon this agreement and separated upon it. Their friendship transcends mere meetings and empty gestures; instead, it causes their minds to merge as if the very atoms of their bodies have become intermingled.

This is what Isma'il Sabri,⁽¹⁾ *may Allah have mercy upon him*, articulated when he said:

'And when we met, our yearning reached its limit,
Two companions melting in ardour after blames,
As though a friend in the qualities of his friend,
Flowed into an embrace, becoming the same.'⁽²⁾

How can the leaders of disbelief embellish misguidance and seduce their followers by using falsehood? Scholars said that the heavenly way must necessarily conflict with the soul's lusts and caprices and that when these lusts and caprices overcome man, he directs his worship to a false deity that sets no commandments or prohibitions. This is how people go astray and come to worship idols and inanimate objects. This worship gives them the religious feelings that

(1) He was Isma'il Sabri Basha, one of the best poets of the modern era. He distinguished himself by the beauty of his verses and the sweetness of his style. He studied law in France and rose through the ranks of judgeship in Egypt. He used to write his poetry in the margins of books and magazines, and his friends would spread it furtively. He rejected a meeting with Lord Cromer, saying, 'I will never be a prime minister if I must abandon my conscience.' He was born in 1854 CE and passed away in 1923 CE at the age of 69.

(2) These two couplets are in the meter of *bahr at-tawil*.

they are naturally inclined to possess but without religious obligations. They are liberating themselves from Divine commandments of Allah's true Path by inventing their own deities.

We previously said that worship (*Al-'ibada*) is the obedience of the devotee to their deity's commandments and prohibitions. The sun or the moon did not issue any commandments or prohibitions to the people who worshipped them and did not offer them any rewards or warn them from any punishments. Thus, these are false deities because the true deity, Allah *the Exalted* has a defined path and a specific set of orders and bans. He also offers paradise as a reward for those who obey His commandments and will punish the people who defy these orders.

The people of the fire then made another observation. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَقَالُوا مَا لَنَا لَا نَرَىٰ رِجَالًا كُنَّا نَعُدُّهُمْ مِنَ الْأَشْرَارِ ﴿٦٢﴾ أَتُخَذْنَهِمْ سِخْرِيًّا
أَمْ ذَاغَتْ عَنْهُمْ الْأَبْصَارُ ﴿٦٣﴾ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَحَقٌّ تَخَاصُمُ أَهْلِ النَّارِ ﴿٦٤﴾

They will say, 'Why do we not see those we thought were bad' [62] and took as a laughing-stock? Have our eyes missed them? [63] This is how it will really be: the inhabitants of the Fire will blame one another in this way [64] (The Quran, *Sad*: 62 - 64)

The people of the fire will wonder about the destiny of the people they had considered as evil in the past life, namely the believers in Allah. This means that the disbelievers of Quraysh will wonder about the place of Prophet Muhammad's Companions whom they had assumed were misguided (for not worshipping their idols) in this world.

Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* heard the same sayings from the disbelievers at his time. They said, 'We do not see in you anything but a mortal man like ourselves, and we do not see that any people follow you except those who are quite obviously the most inferior among us, and we do not see that you could be in any way superior to us. On the contrary, we think that you are

liars.' (*Hud*: 27) The disbelievers of Mecca directed similar descriptions to the early Companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* such as Bilal and Khabbab *Allah be pleased with them*.

So, leaders of disbelievers will be looking around in the fire and will not be able to find these 'wicked' men with them. They will ask, surprisingly, 'How is it that we do not see [here any of the] men whom we considered wicked?' (*Sad*: 62) Then, they will return to themselves and wonder if they were mistaken to have made believers the targets of their worldly mockery and derision: 'Were we incorrect in making them a target of our derision (*sikhriyya*)?' Indeed, in this past life, they described them as wicked when they were actually righteous men. Thus, they will find that their destination was not the same as the people of the fire. The word *sikhriyya* which is used in this verse means ridicule and mockery. However, the word *sukhriyya* with a *damma* refers to the exploitation of a person in a form of labour.

Then, disbelievers will ask further questions: '... Or is it that [they are here, and] our eyes have missed them?' (*Sad*: 63) They will wonder if the believers in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were, perhaps, in the fire, but that their eyes had been averted from seeing the believers' presence. This, too, was not true as these believers will be in paradise.

Indeed, the verse started by mentioning the sayings of the disbelievers with the phrase: '... How is it that we do not see?' (*Sad*: 62) This is very similar to the words spoken by Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* in the story of the hoopoe when he said: 'How is it that I do not see the hoopoe' (*an-Naml*: 20). He meant to say that the hoopoe must surely be present although not being visible to him. Then, he amended his statement by saying: '... or could he be absent from this gathering?' (*an-Naml*: 20)

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: 'Indeed, such will be the [confusion and] mutual wrangling of the people of Hellfire' (*Sad*: 64). The mutual enmity of the people of the fire is inevitable, for they will be misguided or have been misguiding to others. Therefore, each group will cast the blame on the other after seeing the outcome of their actions.

On top of that, it is the Quran which has informed us of their future enmity, and the Quran does not make statements that contradict reality. You can see this fact in the Quranic references to society, from the time of Prophet Muhammad until the present day. Allah *the Most High* did not inform us of anything that contradicted reality. Allah *Glorified is He* said: '... Thus, (it is that) no change will you ever find in Allah's Way' (*Fatir*: 43).

For example, the believers were victorious over the disbelievers in the battle of Badr and took some of the disbelievers as captives. A year later, the battle of Uhud followed, and the disbelievers came from Mecca to a place close to Medina. The indicators were pointing to a victory for the Muslims, but they contravened Allah's Way by disobeying Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had ordered the archers not to leave their posts for any reason. However, when the archers saw that the Muslims had the upper hand and that victory was imminent, they rushed to the battlefield to gather the war spoils and abandoned their posts. The disbelievers seized the opportunity and flanked the Muslims. Thus, the initial victory of the Muslims was dispersed and, although they were not defeated in this battle, they were not triumphant. This happened after Allah *the Almighty* had promised victory to Prophet Muhammad's troops. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'For, long ago has Our Word gone forth unto Our servants, the messengers, that, verily, they indeed would be aided and that, verily, Our hosts would [in the end] be victorious,' (*as-Saffat*: 171-173).

Despite this, the lack of victory at Uhud was beneficial for the faith of Islam, for had the Muslims been victorious in spite of their disobedience to Prophet Muhammad's commands, his commandments would have become less significant in their future. They would have said, 'We were disobedient in the battle of Uhud and were still victorious.' Thus, if you see a soldier of Islam defeated, know that he has gone against Allah's orders in some form by disobeying the directions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or the directions of the commander put in authority by Prophet Muhammad.

So, Allah's traditions regarding victory are constant, but the believer's discipline in following Allah's orders might deviate. This is why we say that

Muslims were not victorious in the battle of Uhud, but Islam was victorious as were the commandments of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Similarly, Allah *the Exalted* has warned us about self-delusion and pride in our strength and numbers because victory does not necessarily come from large numbers. Victory only comes when we follow Allah's Decrees. This was a lesson we learnt at the battle of Hunayn. It was Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* himself who was afflicted by this illusion of numbers. It was claimed that when he saw the number of Muslims compared to the number of disbelievers, he said, 'We will not be defeated today for lack of numbers.'⁽¹⁾ Allah *Glorified is He* taught the Muslims an unforgettable lesson on that day. The disbelievers were almost victorious, but Allah's Mercy was eventually bestowed upon the believers. Then, with Allah's grace, the battle ended in the favour of the Muslims.

Pride and self-delusion are incompatible with the principles of discipline, and victory is neither by numbers nor by technology. Victory only comes from following Allah's Commandments as He says: 'Fight against them! Allah will chastise them by your hands will bring disgrace upon them and will aid you against them, and He will soothe the hearts of those who believe.' (*at-Tawba*: 14) He also says: '... and it was not you who cast, when you did cast it, but it was Allah Who cast [the winning strike]' (*al-Anfal*: 17).

Allah *the Exalted* told us that the people of the fire will fight amongst themselves. Therefore, we have faith that these events will happen as He told them to us.

Allah *the Almighty* then chose to give Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* evidence by saying:

(1) Allah *Glorified is He* said, "Indeed, Allah has aided you on many battlefields [when you were few]. and [He did so, too,] on the Day of Hunayn, when you took pride in your great numbers they proved of no avail whatsoever to you ..." (*at-Tawba*: 25). Ibn Hisham said in *As-Sira An-Nabawiyya* (4/73) that Muhammad ibn Ishaq said, 'Some of the people of Mecca informed me that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said when leaving Mecca for Hunayn, seeing the large number of troops he had with him, 'We will not be defeated today for lack of numbers.' Some people, however, claim that it was a man from the tribe of Bani Bakr who said this phrase.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مُنذِرٌ وَمَا مَنِّ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿٦٥﴾
 رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ ﴿٦٦﴾

[Prophet] say, 'I am only here to give warning. There is no god but God the One, the All Powerful [65] Lord of the heavens and earth and everything between, the Almighty, the Most Forgiving [66] (The Quran, *Sad*: 65-66)

We understand these verses in light of what the Quran narrated to us at the beginning of the chapter, regarding the disbelievers' denial of Prophet Muhammad's message. In the first verses of the chapter, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Now these (people) deem it strange that a warner should have come unto them from their own midst, and [so] the deniers of the truth are saying, "A [mere] spellbinder is he, a liar! Does he claim that all the deities are [but] one god [Allah]? Verily, a most strange thing [monotheism} is," (*Sad*: 4-5) until they said, "'Has the reminding revelation been revealed to him [Muhammad] from amongst all of us?" Nay, but it is My Own reminder that they distrust! Nay, they have not yet tasted my punishment.' (*Sad*: 8)

So, the verses at the beginning of the chapter show us that these people have misunderstandings regarding two issues. The first is the issue of Divine unity as in their words, 'Does he claim that all the deities are [but] one god,' (*Sad*: 5) and the second is prophethood as in their words: 'Has the reminding [book] been revealed to him [Muhammad] from amongst all of us?' (*Sad*: 8)

Thus, Allah revealed verses that aimed to correct these misunderstandings. Allah *Glorified is He* says in this instance: 'Say [O, Muhammad]: I am only a warner' (*Sad*: 65). Allah *the Exalted* chose to mention the warning in this verse, even though Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came as both a bearer of glad tidings and a warner because this speech is aimed at disbelievers.

Regarding the other matter, namely Allah's Oneness, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'There is no deity except Allah, the One, Who holds absolute control over all that exists, the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them *the Almighty* the All-Forgiving!' (*Sad*: 65-66)

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ هُوَ نَبَأٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٦٧﴾ أَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾ مَا كَانَ لِىَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ
بِالْمَلَأِ الْأَعْلَىٰ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ إِن يُوحَىٰ إِلَىٰ إِلَآ أَنَّمَآ أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٧٠﴾

Say, This message is a mighty one [67] yet you ignore it [68]

I have no knowledge of what those on high discuss [69]

it is only revealed to me that I am here to give clear warning[70]

(The Quran, *Sad*: 67-70)

The word *naba'* (message) refers to any important piece of information that is backed up by facts that are in accordance with reality. Allah *Glorified is He* said in the chapter of *an-Naba'*: 'About what do they (most often) ask one another? About the notable tiding (*an-naba'*) [of resurrection]' (*an-Naba'*: 1-2). He described it as 'notable' because the matters of this world and the Hereafter are dependent upon it. If a person follows their sinful passions in this world, then in the next world, they will roast in a fire that has no end.

It is incumbent upon every person to clarify his goals in life. The real goal is that which has no more phases after it. Goals which are followed by other needs are not true goals but are only stages that take a person to a further endeavour. If a student passes an admission exam to a school, this success takes them only to primary school. Success in this stage will allow the student to enter secondary school, and then to university, and so on.

Even if that person obtains a doctorate, he will still move on to continuous stages until he dies. Death is not the ultimate end, for Paradise or the Hellfire come after it. These are the goals after which there are no others because they are ever lasting. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* brought these goals to our attention.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'It is a notable tiding (*naba'*), from which you [the disbelievers] are veering away (*mu'ridoon*).' The word *mu'rid* means 'a person who turns away'. This idiom describes a common form of behaviour when people are called to spend charitably or perform some other good deeds. Some of them turn away, and they may do so in stages. Firstly, they may look away, and then turn their heads and sides before walking away as they give us their backs.

The Quran has painted this picture for us. Allah *Glorified is He* describes the destiny of those who refuse to spend their money in the way of Allah in the following verse: '... But as for all who lay up treasures of gold and silver and do not spend them for the sake of Allah, give them the tidings of grievous suffering [in the life to come]. [This will happen] on the Day when that [hoarded wealth] shall be heated in the fire of hell and their foreheads and their sides and their backs branded therewith.' (*at-Tawba*: 35)

Thus, the reward is from the same breed as the deed. They will be burnt in the same order of their veering away in this world: 'These are the treasures which you have laid up for yourselves! Taste, then, [the evil of] your hoarded treasures.' (*at-Tawba*: 35) So, the limbs which participated in turning away are the very ones which will be punished, and the amount of punishment will be in accordance to the amount of turning away that they did.

Then, Allah *the Most High* told us that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* does not know the Unseen Knowledge (*Ghayb*). Allah *Glorified is He* says: '[Say, O Muhammad:] ... 'In no way did I have any knowledge of the most exalted chiefs [of the Angels] as they took adversary stands [amongst themselves].' (*Sad*: 69)

Allah *Glorified is He* previously spoke of the argumentation of the people of the fire by saying, 'Indeed, such will be the [confusion and] mutual wrangling of the people of Hellfire' (*Sad*: 64). Allah *the Almighty* describes the argument presented by the angels at the time of the creation of Prophet Adam *peace be upon him*: 'Will You place on it beings that will spread corruption thereon and shed blood, whereas it is we who extol Your limitless Glory, praise you and hallow your name?' (*al-Baqara*: 30) This was the 'argument' presented by the angels. It was not a traditional argument as it is unlike the stubborn arguments presented by human beings against Allah's Orders. Allah *Glorified is He* describes these angels: 'Nay, [they are] honoured servants. They speak not until He has spoken unto them, and [whenever they act,] they act at His orders.' (*al-Anbiya*: 26-27)

Therefore, the conversation that took place between Allah and the angels was merely named an argumentation, although it seemed that the angels were only in dismay that He was going to create yet another set of created beings

who would disobey Him and spread corruption in the earth, just as the jinn had done before them.

Then, Allah *the Exalted* told us that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* does not know the Unseen Knowledge by himself. Rather, Allah *Glorified is He* informs him of this knowledge through revelation: 'Decidedly, nothing is revealed to me except that surely I am only an evident constant warner.' (*Sad*: 70)

Thus, the One Who taught human beings these concepts will teach them about things to come, and this is a high level in the knowledge of the Unseen. Indeed, the Unseen is veiled from us. Similarly, the past and future times are also veiled. The past is veiled because the events of ancient times, for example, were not recorded. Even the records laid by human beings are spurious because they have only stated a man's opinion about a particular event. Similarly, the future hides what is yet to happen. As for the present time that we live in, most of it occurs in other places that are veiled from us.

The objective of this verse is to confirm that disbelievers will argue together in hellfire. This is because the one who informed us that the angels argued with Allah *Glorified is He* has also informed us that the disbelievers will argue with each other.

Allah *Glorified is He* also said: '... evident constant warner' (*Sad*: 70). These words were not addressed to righteous people. Rather, they were being addressed to disobedient people. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّیْ خَلِیْقُۡ بَشَرًا مِّنْ طِیْنٍ ﴿٧١﴾ فَاِذَا سَوَّیْتُهُۥ
وَنَفَخْتُ فِیْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِیْ فَقَعُوْا لَهٗۤ سٰجِدِیْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ فَسَجَدَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ
كُلُّهُمْ اَجْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ اِلَّاۤ اِبْلِیْسَ اَسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِیْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾

Your Lord said to the angels, 'I will create a man from clay [71] When I have shaped him and breathed from My Spirit into him, bow down before him [72] The angels all bowed down together [73] but not Iblis, who was too proud. He became a rebel [74] (The Quran, *Sad*: 71-74)

This speech from Allah *the Most High* was to inform the angels that He will create Prophet Adam *peace be upon him*. Yet, the angels assumed that

Allah *the Almighty* was consulting them regarding the creation of man, and this is why they pointed out their fears. They should have realised that the matter was settled, that the case was closed and that Allah was informing them by saying, 'Behold, indeed, I will create (*inni khaliq*) ...' (*Sad*: 71), which is in an emphatic lexical tone.

Thus, we should mention that some people point out Allah's speech regarding the creation of man from clay. They say that the Quran said in one verse that He created Adam 'from water'. In another verse, He said that Adam was created from mud (*teen*). In another verse, the Quran stated that Adam was created from dark slime (*hama' masnun*). Still another verse stated that He was created from sounding clay (*salsal*).

The fact, however, is that these are various stages of one creation, and not different starting points for His creation. When earth is mixed with water, it becomes clay. If clay is left until it starts to decay and its smell changes, it will be 'dark slime' (*hama' masnun*), and if it dries and becomes hard, then it will be sounding clay (*salsal*) like pottery.

When Allah *the Almighty* created man, He did so from a type of clay that contains all of the elements of soil. Scientists have discovered that soil like this is that which is suitable for agriculture because if clay or soil is too cohesive, the water remains around the roots and the plants become unstable and wilt. If it is too sandy, the water leaks away before the roots can absorb it. Thus, we need a form of soil that is between the two types such that it holds enough water for the plants to benefit from and absorb the nutrients while allowing the excess water to drain away without harming the roots.

Scientists have discovered that the human body is composed of sixteen elements, starting with oxygen which comprises 67%, the highest percentage of all, and ending with manganese. These sixteen elements have been also found to be the ingredients of clay which confirms the truth that Allah has created man from clay.

Allah says: '... and when I have formed him fully and breathed into him of My spirit, fall you down before him in prostration' (*Sad*: 72). Allah *the Almighty* thus commanded the angels that, when the creation of Adam has been

completed, both his form and his soul, they should bow down before him. That was not meant as worship of Adam but as obedience of the One Who has given the command to bow down. This act of prostration was not meant to ascribe any divinity to the new created being or hold him sacred, but the angels obeyed it solely in submission to the Lord and Creator Who has thus ordered them. For example, we prostrate ourselves in the direction of the *Ka'ba*. Is this meant to idolise it? No, rather, it is showing obedience to Allah Who has made it obligatory for us to observe *salat* (prayer) in its direction.

So when Allah *the Exalted* gave His command: 'The angels prostrated themselves, all of them together except Satan. He found glory in his arrogance and [thus] became one of the disbelievers.' (*Sad*: 73-74)

Allah *Glorified is He* asked Iblis (Satan):

قَالَ يٰٓإِبْلَيسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ اَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِیَدَیَّ
 اَسْتَكْبَرْتَ اَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْعَالِیْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾

God said, 'Iblis, what prevents you from bowing down to the man I have made with My own hands? Are you too high and mighty?' [75] (The Quran, *Sad*: 75)

Allah tells this story of Iblis' disobedience in seven chapters of the Quran, each time with a different emphasis. In one verse, for example, He says about Iblis (Satan), '... he refused ...' (*al-Hijr*: 31) and in another, '... [He] refused and gloried in his arrogance ...' (*al-Baqara*: 34).

It is worth mentioning, before proceeding with our reflections on the story, that we highlight that the garden (*janna*) from which Adam was driven to the earth was not the same eternal Garden of Paradise. Adam *peace be upon him* was not created for paradise but later was dismissed from it as a punishment because of his disobedience. Rather, Adam was created to be a vicegerent on earth. This is the first information Allah *the Most High* gives about the creation of Adam: '... I am putting a successor on earth ...' (*al-Baqara*: 30). Thus, Adam was originally created to live on earth. Humankind is two categories: infallible, namely the messengers, and fallible, namely the generality of mankind. Since

Adam is the father of all humankind, it was necessary that he should embody the characteristics of both categories. In the beginning, Adam forgot his Lord's Command, so he disobeyed it. Then, Allah *the Exalted* turned to him with Mercy accepted his repentance and made him an infallible messenger who would teach His guidance to his offspring: humankind. Thus, Adam *peace be upon him* did not disobey Allah while he was a prophet, but before he was chosen for the mission of prophethood.

This was the purpose of creating Adam, then, as Allah announced to the angels even before creating him. However, out of His Mercy and Justice, Allah did not want to put Adam to the real test once created. He did not want to send him down to the earth and order him to make it prosperous according to His guidance, thus charge him with a huge responsibility for which he was unprepared. This is why Allah put Adam first in that garden that contained all the necessities and luxuries of life he needed. He gave him simple commands to abide by in it so as to prepare and train him for the ultimate mission.

Allah *the Almighty* permitted Adam to eat from anything in the garden except for one tree, from which he was forbidden even to approach, let alone eat. This was intended to train Adam for the Divine ordinance that necessarily includes obligations and prohibitions. Then, He told Adam that Iblis (Satan) was his sworn enemy and cautioned him against his evil insinuations.

Iblis (Satan) did attempt to lead Adam astray and succeeded in that. Adam ate from the prohibited tree, which was the sin that caused his nakedness to be exposed for the first time. This was meant to symbolise that what causes people to be exposed and their weaknesses to be subject to censure is violation of Allah's Law.

Reflect upon these Words of Allah: '...but do not approach this one tree...' (*al-Baqara*: 35). Allah did not tell Adam: 'Do not eat from this one tree', but He prohibited them from even coming close to it because whoever approaches the forbidden limits is on the brink of trespassing them. This is why when Allah explains to us in the Quran the limits of what He has made permissible for us, He says: '... These are the bounds set by Allah; do not, then, *transgress* them ...' (*al-Baqara*: 229). When He explains the limits of what He has

forbidden, He says: '... These are the bounds set by Allah: do not, then, approach them ...' (*al-Baqara*: 187).

In the verse we are reflecting upon, Allah *Glorified is He* says, addressing Iblis (Satan): '... what prevents you from bowing down ...' (*Sad*: 75). In the chapter of *al-A'raf*, He says: '... What has kept you that you do not bow down?...' (*al-A'raf*: 12) Both structures mean the same. The slight difference between the original two structures in Arabic is that the first is meant to ask Iblis (Satan) why he refused to bow down before Adam. The second means 'did something prevent him from bowing down despite himself?'

Allah *the Exalted* says, describing Adam *peace be upon him*: '... the man I have made with My own Hands ...' (*Sad*: 75). This is to honour Adam and show his elevated status before Allah. Let it indeed suffice as an honour to Adam that Allah associates his creation directly with Himself in the aforementioned verse.

Allah *Glorified is He* continues, addressing Iblis (Satan): '... Are you too high and mighty?' (*Sad*: 75) The words 'high' and 'mighty' are used in this verse as far less eloquent equivalents to two separate descriptions in the Arabic structure of the verse. The first word, 'too high', denotes 'arrogance'; what this means is whether it was arrogance that prevented *Iblis* (Satan) from bowing down before Adam in the first place. The second word, 'mighty', is used in this verse as a translation for the Arabic word used in the original structure of the verse: *al-'alin*.

Scholars have differed concerning the interpretation of the word '*alin*'. Some of them⁽¹⁾ said it denotes arrogance, so the meaning is the following: 'O, Iblis, has arrogance driven you to reject Allah's Command?' An example of this word being used to denote the meaning of 'arrogant' is found in this verse about Pharaoh: '... for, verily, Pharaoh '*ala* (was mighty) on earth ...' (*Yunus*: 83).

(1) *Al-Qurtubi* said in his exegesis that *al-'alin* means those who are too proud that they see themselves above obedience to Allah [8/5871]. *Ibn Al-Jawzi* said in *Zad Al-Masir*, it means Satan was too arrogant that he refused to comply with Allah's Command. *At-Tabari* said in his commentary on the verse, 'It means 'Did you, Satan, deem yourself too great to bow down to Adam, and thus did not bow down before him out of arrogance, even though you were not proud and arrogant before that? Or have you already thought yourself above your Lord even before the creation of Adam?'

Allah *the Almighty* also says: 'As for that [happy] life in the Hereafter, We grant it [only] to those who do not seek *'uluwwan* (exalting themselves on earth)...' (*al-Qasas*: 83). Both *'ala* and *'uluwwan* are derived from the same root as *'alin* and have the same meaning.

Other scholars said that the word *'alin* in the verse we are considering refers to the group of angels who were not included in the command to bow down before Adam *peace be upon him*. The angels who were ordered to bow down before Adam were those whose duties pertain to the life of humankind. These angels are '... those who regulate the affair' (*an-Nazi'at*: 5), and those who protect human beings: 'Each person has guardian angels before him and behind, watching over him by Allah's command ...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 11). These are the ones who were ordered to bow down before Adam. As for the *'alin*, they are the angels who have no work to do other than glorifying Allah and praising His Name. This is the only mission for which they are created. They have no relation to this universe and know nothing of it.

Thus, when Allah *the Exalted* asked Iblis (Satan) if what prevented him from bowing down was that he thought himself from *al-'alin*, the word was meant to refer to the angels who were not included in the command. Considering the word means 'arrogant' is inaccurate, for this meaning is already expressed in the word *istakbarta* (denoting 'high') that precedes it.

Now, let us review the different opinions⁽¹⁾ of scholars concerning the nature of Iblis (Satan). Some of them said he was an angel, and others said he was a jinni. Those who hold the first opinion seek evidence in the Words of Allah: 'Your Lord said unto the angels, "Behold, indeed, I will create a human being out of clay, and when I have formed him fully and breathed into him of My spirit, fall you down before him in prostration!"' (*Sad*: 71-72) They say that Iblis (Satan) must therefore be an angel because the order was given to them as the verse shows. Were he not from the angels, he would not have been punished for his rebellion and refusal to bow down before Adam. This view, however, can

(1) In his exegesis of verse no. 50 of the chapter of *al-Kahf*, At-Tabari mentions the various views of scholars concerning the nature of Iblis (Satan). Some hold the view that he was from a tribe known as Al-Jinn; others said that he was one of the gatekeepers of paradise. Other scholars say that he was referred to as a jinn because he was *istajann* (hidden) from the eyes of humankind.

be decisively refuted. Analogy and reasoning are used to infer rulings in Islam in case there is no clear text in the Quran or *Sunnah* that directly explains that ruling. In the chapter of *al-Kahf*, there is an unequivocal textual proof that Iblis was never an angel, for Allah says: 'We said to the angels, "Bow down before Adam," and they all bowed down, but not Iblis; he was one of the jinns, and he disobeyed his Lord's command ...' (*al-Kahf*: 50). How then can we say Iblis was an angel, while Allah explicitly states that he was a jinni?

Some might inquire: 'Why then did Allah punish him for not bowing down before Adam?' To answer this, we need to know that the angels have no free will to choose to obey Allah or defy Him. It is their natural disposition to be totally submissive to Him, as Allah says: '... angels who never disobey Allah's Commands to them, but do as they are ordered' (*at-Tahrim*: 6). Unlike angels, humankind and jinns are given the freedom of choice between faith and disbelief, obedience and disobedience. Thus, if one of them commits himself to obedience, he is better than the angels, for the angels do not have the power to disobey Allah. As for people and jinn, they can disobey Him, but the devout amongst them choose not to do so.

Allah bestowed upon Iblis (Satan) a distinctive status amongst the angels, for he took it upon himself to obey His Lord by his own will and choice. It was said that he was called 'The Pride of the Angels' because of his virtue over them. Therefore, when Allah gave the angels the command to bow down before Adam, Iblis was also included. Since he had always chosen to be devout to his Lord, which earned him that honourable status amongst the angels, it befitted him then to obey this command of his Lord.

Even considering the view that he was below the angels, a command that was given to his superiors and whom they obeyed must necessarily have included him as well, being inferior to them, and he should have obeyed it, too. Suppose a president of a state entered a room, and his ministers all stood up as a token of respect. It would be then even more incumbent on undersecretaries, being their inferiors, to stand up for the president. No need, therefore, to dispute over this point with no avail.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Thereupon the angels prostrated themselves, all of them together except Satan. He found glory in his arrogance and [thus] became

one of the disbelievers.' (*Sad*: 73-74) Accordingly, Iblis (Satan) had the free will to choose, and since he chose to disobey Allah, he deserved to be punished.

In the following verse, Allah *Glorified is He* tells the reason on which basis Iblis disobeyed the command to bow down to Adam:

قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ خَلَقْنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقَهُ مِن طِينٍ ﴿٧٦﴾

Iblis said, 'I am better than him: You made me from fire, and him from clay' [76] (The Quran, *Sad*: 76)

Indeed Adam *peace be upon him* was made from clay and Iblis (Satan) was made from fire, but based on what argument can one claim that clay is inferior to fire? Anything in creation does not derive its worth from its kind or composition, but from its Creator. So one species is not better than another, for Allah has created them all and given each of them a purpose in life. All humankind and jinns are equal before Allah, and superiority is solely on the basis of devoutness. This is what makes believers and disbelievers receive their provisions alike from Allah *the Most High*. What Allah gives specially to believers is the gift of being His true worshippers, for they have chosen to embrace faith while others have chosen to defy their Lord and Creator. So, when Iblis (Satan) rebelled against Allah's Command, claiming superiority over Adam, Allah told him:

قَالَ فَخُذْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَجِيمٌ ﴿٧٧﴾ وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ لَعْنَتِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٧٨﴾

**Get out of here! You are rejected [77]
My rejection will follow you till the Day of
Judgement! [78] (The Quran, *Sad*: 77-78)**

Since his disobedience stemmed from arrogant defiance of his Lord, Allah punished Iblis (Satan) by eternal expulsion from His Mercy. The verse which says, 'My rejection will follow you till the Day of Judgment!' (*Sad*: 78) comes as emphasis of the decree issued against Iblis and stated in the preceding verse: '... You are rejected.' (*Sad*: 77)

Having been turned out of Allah's Mercy, Iblis (Satan) replies:

قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾ قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾
إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ ﴿٨١﴾

**But Iblis said, ‘My Lord, grant me respite until
the Day when they are raised from the dead’ [79]
So He said, ‘You have respite [80] till the
Appointed Day [81] (The Quran, *Sad*: 79-81)**

In reply to his Lord's decree against him, Iblis entreats Him to delay his death until the Final Day. This proves that he believes everyone has an appointed day when his life in this world must inevitably come to an end. This also exposes his falsehood and malice when he said to Adam *peace be upon him* trying to tempt him to eat from the forbidden tree: '... shall I show you the tree of immortality and power that never decays?' (*Ta Ha*: 120) Had there been a tree that could give one eternity, why had he not eaten from it himself, instead of asking his Lord to give him respite till the Final Day? This also shows the heedlessness of Adam, for had he been mindful then of this plain truth, that this life must certainly end, he would not have eaten from the tree.

It is also worthy to note that Iblis (Satan) himself undertook the plot against Adam *peace be upon him*. He did not leave this task of tempting the father of humankind to any one of his offspring. Scholars say Adam was honoured by his Lord so much that he was granted the ranks of the angels. It was not appropriate, therefore, to assign the job of tempting him to any but the very worst of all devils: Iblis (Satan) himself.

Thus, Allah granted Iblis what he asked and delayed his end till the Day when creatures are resurrected for reckoning. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:



قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٨٢﴾ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

**Iblis said, “I swear by Your might! I will tempt all [82]
but Your true servants” [83] (The Quran, *Sad*: 82 - 83)**

This verse indicates that the enmity Iblis (Satan) harboured was not against his Lord, but Adam and his offspring. Iblis (Satan) knew how to make an

oath, when he said: '... I swear by Your Might ...' (*Sad*: 82). He knew Allah is *the Almighty*; he knew He is far Exalted above any need for them, their faith or their worship. Indeed we do not benefit Allah by our worship, do we harm Him by our disobedience. It is own for our own good, so let each do what he likes and bear the consequences then: '... "Now the truth has come from your Lord. Let those who wish to believe in it do so and let those who wish to reject it do so." We have prepared a Fire for the wrongdoers ...' (*al-Kahf*: 29). Fully mindful of this ultimate truth, Iblis (Satan) has decided to tempt all humankind into sinfulness. Nevertheless, he knows with certainty that he can have no power over those servants of Allah who are truly devoted to Him, so he says: '... I will tempt all but Your true servants' (*Sad*: 82-83). Iblis (Satan) knows Allah is Independent of any need of His servants or their worship, so he decided to avenge on the offspring of Adam by leading them astray.

Allah *Glorified is He* says afterwards:

 قَالَ فَالْحَقُّ وَالْحَقَّ أَقُولُ
 لَا مَلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكَ وَمِمَّن تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

Allah said, "This is the truth – I speak only the truth [84] I will fill Hell with you and all those that follow you" [85] (The Quran, *Sad*: 84 - 85)

Allah *the Exalted* speaks only the truth and whatever He does is done with truth, so He tells Iblis (Satan) that what He has done to him, the punishment He inflicted on him, has certainly been done with truth, for He is the Lord of truth. Allah declares that He will fill hellfire with Iblis and whoever follows his way of people and jinns, his offspring and Adam's offspring. This is a deserved punishment. Allah *the Almighty* is never unjust to any creature.

Some would wonder if this declaration Allah makes to Iblis bear proof that He has already preordained Hell or Paradise for whomever He wills of His servants. Does it mean they have no choice, and Allah has already decided their destinies even before they were created? To answer this, we must know that there is no compulsion in the case. The truth is that Allah, Who is the Creator of all humankind and jinn, knows well what He has created. His omnipotent

Knowledge has already encompassed all about the choices His servants would make. Based on that Knowledge, he has decided the final destiny of each. He does not force anyone to make a certain choice or another. To Allah belongs the Highest Similitude, yet there is no harm of using comparisons for the purpose of illustration. A teacher, based on expert knowledge of his students, can well predict their results. He would tell who would pass, who would fail and who would excel. Does he exercise any interference, let alone compulsion, with his students? No, but he can pass judgements based on his knowledge of them, and each student certainly has full power and freedom to study or not and write whatever they choose in their exams.

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the chapter with the following verses:

قُلْ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُتَكَلِّفِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾
 إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَلَنَعْلَمَنَّ نَبَاهُ بَعْدَ حِينٍ ﴿٨٨﴾

[Prophet], say, 'I ask no reward from you for this, nor do I claim to be what I am not [86] This is only a warning for all people [87] In time you will certainly come to know its truth' [88] (The Quran, *Sad*: 86 - 88)

The first verse begins with an order to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The original Arabic text of the verse literally translates as the following: '... I do not ask any reward from you. ...' The use of 'any' is for the sake of emphasis. Were it, '... I do not ask reward from you ...', without using 'any', it would be correct and would convey the same meaning. Still, the emphasis added to the structure is meant to tell that Prophet Muhammad does not seek by his call anything that can possibly be called 'reward', not even the most trifling thing that can be given by way of reward. Is it exactly the same to say, 'I do not have money,' or 'I do not have any money'? The latter structure adds more emphasis to the meaning. It means the speaker does not have even a penny.

In this verse, Allah orders Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to tell his people that he was after no reward from them. This bears a message that what the Prophet was sent with is for the good of people in everything pertaining to this worldly life and the Afterlife. Therefore, he certainly

deserves a reward, but he never asked people for it, for no human being could ever pay him his due for the service he has rendered to humanity by guiding them to the true religion. Only Allah *the Most High* can reward him for that; He alone is Capable of recompensing His Messenger for the great good he has done. It is not that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not want a reward at all. Rather, he wanted to have it from the One Who has sent him with the Message.

All the messengers of Allah have said as such to their people. They all declared that even though they reserved to be rewarded they wanted no reward from their people. The only exceptions from this were Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon them*. Why is this so? Scholars say that the first person Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) called to faith was his uncle Azar, and it would not have been appropriate to ask an uncle for a reward. Likewise, the first Prophet Musa (Moses) called to faith was Pharaoh who had brought him up and been good to him, so it would not have been fitting for him to mention anything about a reward to a person who acted like a father to him.

Allah *Glorified is He* then commands Prophet Muhammad to say: '...nor do I claim to be what I am not' (*Sad*: 86). The Arabic word used in the original structure of the verse is *mutakallif* which denotes pretence or affecting what is beyond one's capacity. This word can be found in the following Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, 'Do not *tatakallafu* (overburden yourselves by showing too much hospitality) to your guests such that you end up disliking to receive guests.'⁽¹⁾ It means do not offer more than you can afford. Some would borrow money to buy foods and refreshments for their guests. Guests leave and debts remain. This may lead one to hate to receive guests and

(1) This Hadith is cited by Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali in his *Ihya' 'Ulum Ad-Din* [2/12]. Al-Hafizh Al-'Iraqi said about it, 'It was narrated by Abu Bakr ibn Lal in *Makarim Al-Akhlaq* on the authority of Salman, saying, "Let none of you take upon himself more than he is able to for the sake of his guest."' In the chain of narrators, there is Mohammad ibn Al-Faraj Al-Azraq concerning whose authenticity doubts have been raised amongst the scholars of Hadith. Adh-Dhahabi said about him in *Mizan Al-Itidal* [8051], 'He is well known and truthful.' Al-Hakim expressed doubts concerning him only because he accompanied Al-Hussayn Al-Karabisi, and that was rather scrupulous. Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi said about him [3/159], 'His narrations are authentic. I know nothing blameworthy about him.'

find it odious that a guest should ever enter his house. Be natural and host your guests according to your means. Do not claim to have what you do not.

When Prophet Muhammad said, as Allah commanded him, '... nor do I claim to be what I am not' (*Sad*: 86), he meant that he did not need to resort to pretence to confer importance upon the Message he has come with. What he has come with does not require excessive persuasion, for it already accords with the natural disposition of humankind. Anyone who examines the rulings of Islam would find that they are in perfect harmony with nature. Islam forbids lying and cheating. Are they not truly harmful behaviours that should be stopped? Islam forbids drinking alcohol. Do we not all agree that it corrupts the mind, the very special gift with which Allah has honoured humankind? The answers are clear and do not require excessive persuasion for one to be satisfied with them, for they are in harmony with human disposition.

Allah says in the following verse: 'This is only a *dhikr* (reminder; warning) for all people.' (*Sad*: 87) The Quran does not bring to people anything new to them, but it is only a reminder. The purpose of a reminder is to bring back to mind what has been forgotten. The Quran is meant to remind us of the first covenant we made with Allah when we were still in the realm of the Unseen, still only seeds in the loins of our father, Adam, and have not yet been brought to existence. Back then, Allah *Glorified is He* asked us all: '... Am I not your Lord? ...' (*al-A'raf*: 172) We all concurred: '... Yes, indeed ...' (*al-A'raf*: 172). Then Allah *the Exalted* told everyone to remember this covenant: '... [Of this We remind you,] lest you say on the Day of Resurrection, "Verily, we were unaware of this." Or lest you say, "Verily, it was but our forefathers who, in times gone by, began to ascribe divinity to other beings beside Allah, and we were but their late offspring ...' (*al-A'raf*: 172-173). Thus, Allah *the Most High* has not compelled us to make this covenant upon us, but we have made it willingly. We have accepted responsibility while we were but seeds in the loins of our father Adam *peace be upon him* when we did not have any desires or caprices yet to drag us into falsehood.

Therefore, what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* teaches is not something new. The doctrine of monotheism and the obligations that

faith entails are an ancient message that all humankind have already known and accepted, and the Quran is only a reminder of that first covenant.

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the chapter by the verse: 'In time you will certainly come to know its truth.' (*Sad*: 88) Those who deny the Quran will come to know the results of their denial. They will know that its revelations were true. Scholars say that, 'In time ...' in this verse refers to the time when Islam becomes victorious over disbelief, which started from the Battle of Badr until the time when it was said, 'It is astounding how that unlettered man conquered half the world in half a century!' It was indeed amazing, and it still is until today. Those who denied Islam witnessed its victory and the collapse of disbelief in the face of the true religion. They witnessed the retreat of the borders of the territories of disbelief and the expansion of the territories of Islam. Allah *the Almighty* refers to this in the verse: 'Do they not see how We come to [their] land and shrink its borders?...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 41) Despite that, they did not heed the lesson.

Other scholars said that 'In time...' (*Sad*: 88) may also refer to the Day of Judgment when disbelievers enter hellfire. Then they will know the truth of the revelations Allah had sent down in the Quran.

The word *naba'* used in the Arabic text of the verse to refer to the message of the Quran denotes 'important news', as Allah says: 'Say, "It is a notable tidings from which you are veering away."' (*Sad*: 67-68) What do you think of a message that Allah described as mighty? The importance of any news is determined by the amount of good that it brings to one. The news of passing an admission test to school or college is not like that of being nominated a minister, for example. How, then, about the news that determines your destiny and happiness both in this life and the Hereafter? Such happiness can only be attained by heeding the Message of Allah and fulfilling one's duty to Him. What news can have more importance or greatness than the news brought from the Lord in His Glorious Book? May Allah make us of the believers who will find the truth of what has been told in the Quran on the Day of Judgment! Amen!

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