

vol. [22]

REFLECTIONS

EL SHA'RAWY
الشعر اوان

فواطـر

المجلد [22]



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

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Published by :



AL HOŞN RESEARCH & STUDIES CENTRE

Tel +97126265151

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Printing & Binding:

Printing Group

info@printinggroup.com

ISBN: 978-9948-36-806-9

First edition 1441 H. - 2020

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the chapter of

ash-Shura

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

The chapter of *ash-Shura*⁽¹⁾ (Consultation):

Allah *Glorified is He* states:



Ha Mim [1] ‘Ayn Sin Qaf [2]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 1-2)

These opening letters are one of many instances in which individual, unconnected letters appear at the beginning of several chapters throughout the Noble Quran. Although such letters have already been discussed in several places, it is worth remembering here that the entire Quran is connected and unified – verses are connected to other verses, chapters to other chapters, all united from beginning to end. Thus we read, for example: ‘from all [temptation to evil by] invisible forces as well as men’ (*an-Nas*: 6), the last verse in the Quran, in which the final *kasra* (vowel) connects back to: ‘In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Dispenser of Mercy’ (*al-Fatiha*: 1) in the chapter of *al-Fatiha*.

With regard to how to read letters such as these, they are each pronounced separately; in this particular chapter, they are read: ‘*Ha. Mim. ‘Ayn. Sin. Qaf.*’

(1) The chapter of *ash-Shura* comes forty-second (42) according to the order of chapters in the Noble Quran, having been revealed immediately after the chapter of *Fussilat*. It is a Meccan chapter, according to *Al-Hassan*, *‘Ikrama*, *‘Ata and Jabar*. *Ibn ‘Abbas* and *Qatada* maintain that only four verses from it were revealed in Medina. They start with the verse: ‘...Say [O Prophet]: “No reward do I ask of you for this [message] other than [that you should] love your fellow-men”...’ (*ash-Shura*: 23) up to and including the verse: ‘and responds to all who attain to faith and do righteous deeds...’ (*ash-Shura*: 26).

We read the individual letters: 'Alif. Lam. Mim.' in the beginning of the chapter of *al-Baqara*, as well as the beginning of the chapter of *ash-Sharh*, in different ways in spite of the letters being the same. In the chapter of *ash-Sharh*, we read them as one word: 'Alm' 'Have we not opened up your heart?' (*ash-Sharh*: 1) These and other separate letters show up in various chapters, in order for the reader to understand that the Quran is unlike any other book; and, moreover, to learn that its recitation depends on the fact that a person who recites it has heard it recited before. This is the intended meaning of the verse: 'Thus, when We recite it, follow its wording [with all thy mind]: [18] and then, surely, it will be for Us to make its meaning clear [19]' (*al-Qiyama*: 18-19).

Given such reflection on these letters, it becomes clear that there is wisdom in reciting the Quran with a mind to its overarching interconnectedness, while at the same time focusing on the separate pronunciation of individual letters. Indeed, it is individual letters which provide the building blocks for words, and, subsequently, broader linguistic constructs such as expressions and phrases. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* expounded the importance of pronouncing these letters from the Quran individually, 'I do not pronounce the letters *Alif-Lam-Mim* as one letter; rather, I pronounce *Alif* as one letter, and *Lam* as another letter, and *Mim* as another.'⁽¹⁾

The letters which appear in a language can be divided into two major types. The first type involves letters utilised as building blocks to create broader linguistic constructs, such as words and phrases. For example, the word 'to write' (*kataba*) in Arabic is made up of three consonants – *Kaf*, *Ta*, and *Ba* – which only have meaning when grouped together and arranged to create words. The second type of letters entails those which carry meaning individually. A good example of this type is the Arabic letter *Kaf*, which may act as a preposition of comparison when placed at the beginning of words. In the phrase, 'the soldier is like a lion' (*al-jundi kal-asad*), the individual letter *Kaf* stands at the

(1) 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'He who recites a letter from the Book of Allah obtains a good deed therein, one good deed equals ten such good deeds. I do not pronounce the letters *Alif-Lam-Mim* as one letter; rather, I pronounce *Alif* as one letter, and *Lam* as another letter and *Mim* as another.' Narrated by At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (2910); he rated it as authentic.

front of the word 'like a lion' (*kal-asad*) as a means of pointing out the similarity between a soldier and the feline predator. However, it is clear from this instance that even though letters of this second type carry meaning in and of themselves, they must still be attached to other words in order to create that meaning.

It should also be pointed out that language is a social phenomenon, shared by a community and by which every nation and people express desires and goals and cooperates with one another. Language is, as some scholars have put it, the daughter of imitation: that which the ears hear, the tongue will surely reproduce. By way of example, if a young boy were raised in an Arab society, he would speak Arabic; if he were brought up in an English-speaking country, he would of course speak English. This is so because language is not an inherent physical trait, such as blood type or physical gender; rather, it is a social phenomenon based on hearing the spoken language, then repeating it. A native speaker of a particular language might even not understand certain words from his own language when he encounters them for the first time despite the fact that they are fully of that language simply because he has never heard them before.

It was narrated that the grammarian Abu Aqlama⁽¹⁾ was infatuated with pure, classical Arabic, and would speak it all the time. He would frequently employ obscure, esoteric expressions which frustrated his servant boy no end, since he could not understand his master. One night, Abu Aqlama awoke from his slumber and asked the servant, 'Hey boy! *asa'akat al-atarif*?'⁽²⁾ (These are strange, old Arabic words.) The servant boy had no idea what this meant, and he responded in a tone of annoyance: '*ziq faylam!*' (These are words the servant fabricated.) This astounded Abu Aqlama, who asked him, 'What does '*ziq faylam!*' mean?' His servant boy asked, 'Well, what does '*asa'akat al-atarif*' mean?' Abu Aqlama responded: 'I meant to ask: "Have the cocks crowed?"' His servant said, 'Well, I meant to say, "No, they have not."'

(1) The story of *Abu Aqlama* the grammarian with the maid

(2) This tale first appeared in the book *Dictionary of the Literati Mu'jam al-udaba'* from *Yaqut Al-Hamwi*, who quotes from *Abu Bakr Mohammad ibn Khalaf ibn Al-Marzuban* in the *Book of Weighty Matters Kitab ath-thuqala'*. Concerning the grammarian *Abu Aqlama*, also known as *An-Namiri*, *Yaqut al-Hamwi* states, 'He is of the people of *Wasit*.'

There is another story⁽¹⁾ from among various anecdotes about the vagaries of language that illustrates the point that even native speakers of a language are confounded by words which they have never heard before. A man went to the doctor, named A'yun, who asked the man what was ailing him. The man said, 'I have eaten the meat of these jawazi', and I tasa'tu from it a tas'ah which has afflicted me with such pain that spread from al-wabilah to da'yat al-unuq. Since then, it has gotten worse, to the point that khalat al-halb, causing me pain in the sharasif,' (all are incomprehensible words). The doctor said, 'Would you please repeat that? I did not understand a word of what you said.' The man repeated his complaint, after which the doctor said, 'Take hurqufan, salqafan, sarqafan, zahraqah and zaqzaqah, then convulse it all together and dilute with dung water, then drink!' In response, the man asked, 'Would you please repeat that? I did not understand a word of what you said.' The doctor exclaimed, 'May Allah curse whichever of us is most responsible for these ludicrous misunderstandings!'⁽²⁾

As previously mentioned, these and other examples illustrate that language is the result of imitation, since all language learning is ultimately based on listening to what other people say, then repeating it ourselves. A small child learns to speak by first listening to what family members say around him; likewise, a deaf-mute person cannot speak because he is unable to hear. This is why *the Most High* says, 'Deaf, dumb and blind...' (*al-Baqara*: 18). Muteness follows deafness since the reason for muteness is that a deaf person cannot hear the sounds characteristic of a particular language. If we trace the chain of language learning back to its source, we find our father Adam *peace be upon him*:

(1) The story of A'yun, the medicine man with a patient

(2) This story also happens to be about the grammarian *Abu Aqlama*, and which story *Ibn Al-Jawzi* recalls in the reports of *Al-Hamqa* and *the Heedless Ones*, in the chapter 'On the Lack of Desinential Inflection in the Swimmer's Speech' *Adam mukhatib Al-Awam bil-'irab*. Here, the phrase 'hump-backed ungulate' *jawazim* means 'camel,' that is the man ate camel meat. 'I was afflicted with dyspepsia' *tasa'tu* means 'I had indigestion,' especially as a result of eating fatty foods. The man in the story is afflicted with indigestion, which causes discomfort from the heads of his femurs that is, the top of his thighbones all the way to his nape that is, the back of his neck and back. The pain continued to spread until it reached his ureters, which cover areas between the heart and the liver, causing him pain at the outer extremities of his ribs.

we learned language from our parents, and they learned from their parents, and so on, leading all the way back to Adam *peace be upon him* who was taught language by his Lord, Allah *Glorified is He*. We understand this to be the case when Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And He taught Adam all the names...’ (*al-Baqara*: 31) meaning the names of all things found in creation. It is clear from this explanation that Allah *Glorified is He* is the original Teacher of language, and the source thereof.

There is another observation to be made about the disjointed letters found throughout the Quran, which is that, through such letters, we learn to exercise faith in the Unseen. The True Lord has imbued all creation with both visible and unseen aspects, and there are times in which He uses that which is seen to imply the Unseen. For example, one of the central tenets of the true religion, we believe in, is that there is a Creator for the universe; we can give evidence of this with Allah’s visible signs, in the universe.

However, this doctrine of The Creator also involves faith in things unseen that have no visible or tangible evidence, such as the existence of angels. Likewise, the creed also has unseen matters that cannot be physically observed: as long as there are acts of obedience and acts of disobedience, there must be a paradise and a hell, and the grave stage that precedes this, with its bliss or torment. In spite of this, we believe in these unseen aspects of creation because they are made known to us by that Allah *Glorified is He* in whom we have faith, and in whose saying on these matters we trust.

In sum, every outward, visible aspect of true doctrines carries with it an unseen aspect at the same time. It is belief in the Unseen which is the litmus test of faith, and of the strength of one’s belief in the true religion, for anyone can believe in what is seen.

By way of example, let us suppose that a man employs a servant, whom the man requests to remove a large stone from his garden. The servant complains: ‘But it is quite a heavy stone; I do not think I can lift it!’ His master responds: ‘Well, there is a sack of money hidden under the stone; when you remove the rock from on top of it, I will pay you your wages from the money in that sack.’ The servant then rushes to the stone and easily removes it from the garden! This is a clear example of faith in what is seen, rather than what is

unseen: the servant was motivated to remove the stone only after receiving the promise of a tangible reward. As this example makes clear, everyone can believe in what is clearly visible; which is why belief in the Unseen is the true test of faith. Hence Allah's description of true believers as: 'Those who believe in the Unseen...' (*al-Baqara*: 3).

What we have just discussed regarding belief in the Unseen also applies to the word of the True Lord and His Noble Quran that include words and letters which carry meaning, as well as letters that do not carry meaning and whose interpretation is unclear to us; such as the disjointed letters which we believe in though unseen.

As discussed previously, the disjointed letters appearing throughout the Quran comprise half of the total Arabic alphabet, namely fourteen out of twenty-eight letters in all. Further reflection confirms that the letters have been selected in a way that is anything but random or haphazard. Let us divide the Arabic alphabet into three segments: two groups of nine letters apiece, comprising the first and last nine letters of the alphabet, with a third group consisting of the remaining ten letters in the middle of the alphabet. We notice that, of the fourteen Arabic letters that appear at the beginning of Quranic chapters, only two, *Alif* and *Ha'*, are taken from the first group, leaving behind seven others. Seven of the last nine letters appear disjointed throughout the Quran, leaving behind two from that group. Of the remaining ten letters from the middle of the alphabet, only those without diacritical marks appear as disjointed letters in the Quran, leaving behind those requiring such marks. From this, we see a method and a wise purpose in the selection of the disjointed letters in the Quran.

As we read the Quran, we strive to interpret what these letters mean; the mind might keep mulling over any number of explanations for their presence; sometimes it succeeds and sometimes it fails. However, we must eventually admit that only Allah *Glorified is He* knows their meaning for certain. Each scholar and learned man who attempts to understand them or to extract wisdom from them is deemed diligent, and he will be rewarded.

What is most important for us to remember, is that the True Lord desires for us to have faith in these letters and to accept them as they are, whether or

not we fully understand them. They are like the grooves in a key, which have order and which fit perfectly inside a specific lock, even though they may look random to us. The person using the key only needs to understand its ultimate purpose and function and to trust that the locksmith understands the secrets of his trade.

It is true that we try to encompass the meaning of these letters with our understanding; as mentioned, such efforts may even bear fruit, in the form of interpretation or explanation. However, the Quran continues to be inimitable, just as these letters continue to offer us renewed, inexhaustible inspiration. When the Quran challenged the Arabs and made them stand helpless and unable to produce even one verse, some took this to mean that their prestige was diminished, since they were unable to produce such language themselves; but that challenge actually indicated their skill, eloquence, and command of the language; if not so, the Quran would not have challenged them. Thus, the challenge actually honoured and elevated them; for Allah *Glorified is He* set their skills as standards for language proficiency.

When the Quran came to the Arabs in its inimitability, it did not do so with words or letters unknown to Arabic before that point; the linguistic components of the Quran are the same found in the Arabic language generally. Despite this, however, the Word of the True Lord continues to be inimitable, and the Arabs who first received it were unable to come up with anything like it. It is inimitable because it is the Word of Allah *Glorified is He* who speaks matchless words through His own abundant Power; His incomparable words reflect His own inimitable Nature and Authority. Mortal words, by contrast, are not inimitable, since they come from us, humans, and therefore reflect our own weakness and inability.

The chapter of *ash-Shura* is one of several chapters known as the *hawamim*⁽¹⁾, which denote the fact that they begin with the individual letters *Ha Mim*.

(1) *Hawamim* chapters, as noted, are those in which Allah *the Most High* begins by saying, ‘*Ha. Mim.*’ There are seven total *Hawamim* in the Quran: *al-Mu’minun*, *Fussilat*, *ash-Shura*, *az-Zukhruf*, *ad-Dukhan*, *al-Jathiya* and *al-Ahqaf*. ‘Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* describes them as the ‘brides of the Quran’; Ibn ‘Abbas calls them the ‘quintessence of the Quran’. Ibn Mas‘ud states that the *Hawamim* are the ‘Quran’s silk brocade’ see *Al-‘Iqd Al-farid* by Ibn Abd Rabbuh, in the section ‘On their statements against the Quran’.

Quranic chapters begin with these and other such letters in any number of combinations. For example, there are some which begin with only one individual letter, such as *Nun*, *Qaf* or *Sad*. Others have two letters, such as *Ta Sin*. There are some which start with three-letter groupings, like *Alif Lam Mim* and *Ta Sin Mim*. Still, others have combinations of four letters, including *Alif Lam Mim Ra*, and *Alif Lam Mim Sad*. Finally, there are chapters beginning with five-letter groups, such as *Ha Mim 'Ayn Sin Qaf*,⁽¹⁾ and *Kaf Ha Ya 'Ayn Sad*. As stated, we are unsure as to the meaning of such letters, but we believe them to come from the Unseen, in which we are commanded to have faith. As for attempts at explaining these letters, it is best to say that only Allah *Glorified is He* knows what they mean with any certainty.

Then, the True Lord says:

كَذَٰلِكَ يُوحِيٓ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكَ اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٣﴾

**This is how God, the Mighty, the Wise, sends
revelation to you [Prophet] as He did to those
before you [3] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 3)**

The letter *Kaf* in the Arabic word for *kadhalika* (this is how) means 'like' or 'as', indicating similitude; the word *dhalika* is an indicative pronoun that refers back to the disjointed letters that preceded this verse: it is through such means as these letters that '...He Allah, the Mighty, the Wise, sends revelation to you [Prophet] as He did to those before you' (*ash-Shura*: 3). The disjointed letters, along with that which comes afterward, are revelation from Allah *Glorified is He* to His prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

(1) In his Quranic exegesis, *Al-Qurtubi* quotes from *Al-Hussayn ibn Fadl*, who put forth the question, 'Why are some individual letters in the Quran connected or separated in the way that they are? For example, in the group of letters '*Ha-Mim 'Ayn-Sin-Qaf*,' why are the first two letters separated from the last three? This is in contrast to other five-letter groupings in the Quran, such as '*Kaf-Ha-Ya- 'Ayn-Sad*,' which are all connected in one group. The answer is that the five-letter combination '*Ha-Mim. 'Ayn-Sin-Qaf*' appears among other chapters that begin with the '*Ha-Mim*' combination. It therefore also starts with '*Ha-Mim*' in the same fashion as those other chapters. But it is also set apart from them by the '*Ayn-Sin-Qaf*' which follow, acting as if it were the predicate of '*Ha-Mim*' in a nominal sentence.

The concept of revelation involves surreptitious communication between a speaker and a listener, or the one who reveals and the one to whom something is revealed. If a nobleman invites a guest to his house for dinner, and that nobleman wishes to give an order to his servant without the guest knowing, he gives his servant a look or whispers to him in a way that the guest does not notice. It is as though the nobleman revealed the matter unto his servant, but not to the guest.

Thus, any instance of revealed communication requires one who reveals a message, a person to whom a message is revealed, and the revealed message itself. The True Lord informs us that He concedes His revelation to whichever of his creations He pleases. This includes revelation to angels, as in the verse: ‘Your Lord revealed to the angels: “I am with you: give the believers firmness”...’ (*al-Anfal*: 12). Allah *Glorified is He* also confers revelation upon His messengers, which we learn from the verse: ‘We have sent revelation to you [Prophet] as We did to Nuh (Noah) and the prophets after him, to Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac), Ya’qub (Jacob)...’ (*an-Nisa*: 163). In addition, He makes His revelation known unto those servants who are truly righteous, as when he also confers revelation upon the disciples of ‘Isa (Jesus), the mother of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* the ants and even inanimate objects such as the earth: ‘because your Lord will inspire it [to do so]’ (*az-Zalzala*: 5).

The True Lord has also informed us that devils reveal secrets to each other, as do devilish people. We read Allah’s *Glorified is He* statement that ‘...The evil ones incite their followers...’ (*al-An’am*: 121), that is, their followers from among humans. He also says: ‘...They suggest alluring words to one another in order to deceive...’ (*al-An’am*: 112). Thus, *wahy* (revelation), in general, is carried out surreptitiously. Moreover, the revelation may be of what is good or what is evil.

As for lawful revelation, it is that which Allah *Glorified is He* made known unto His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* through the angel Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* who acted as an intermediary. Allah *Glorified is He* states: ‘It is not granted to any mortal that Allah should speak to him except through revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger to reveal by His command what He will: He is exalted and wise’ (*ash-Shura*: 51).

In all, lawful revelation is that which Allah *Glorified is He* informs His chosen messengers *peace be upon them* of by such means as angelic declaration or personal inspiration. Regarding this point, it has been previously explained that what is received from Allah does not clash with what is received from Satan because what is received from Allah is far more powerful and is invincible.

In the story of the mother of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* for example, Allah *Glorified is He* states: '*wa awhayna ila ummi Musa*', 'We inspired Musa's (Moses') mother...' (*al-Qasas*: 7). Here, the word *awhayna* means that Allah *Glorified is He* inspired Musa's (Moses') mother to action, uttering His word to her soul. By conveying revelation to her mind, He thus made it known that she should: '...Suckle him, and then, when you fear for his safety, put him in the river...' (*al-Qasas*: 7). Even though this inspiration came to the mother of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* in a way which reason cannot explain, the fact that she was given Divine insight left no other choice for Musa's (Moses') *peace be upon him* mother but to submit to and carry out Allah's command, which she did immediately.

When the True Lord wanted to inform the Companions of His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of religious matters, He sent Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* and made him appear to the Companions in the form of a man. They marvelled as Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* began to question the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* about faith and submission to Allah *Glorified is He* and acts of charity, listening as he put forth queries and affirmed the Messenger's responses. When the questioning had ended, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Indeed, Jibril (Gabriel) came today in order to teach you about matters pertaining to your religion.'⁽¹⁾

(1) Quoting from '*Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him*: 'Meanwhile, we were tarrying in the presence of the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when there appeared to us a man with an exceedingly white robe and dark hair. He showed no signs of fatigue from travel, even though he had only just come to us. Even though none of us knew who he was, he came over and sat down next to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* rested his knees together, put his hands on his thighs and leaned forward, and inquired, "O Muhammad, speak to me of true religion *Al-Islam*." He, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "True=

In the verse under consideration, then, we gain insight into the nature of Allah's role as the One Who reveals: 'This is how He Allah, the Mighty, the Wise, sends revelation to you [Prophet] as He did to those before you' (*ash-Shura*: 3). He does not use the phrase 'your Lord' here, and uses 'Allah' which places more emphasis on Allah's Divinity, which emphasises His Divine role as the object of worship. This means that He has established the Path for us to follow, complete with accompanying obligations and commandments to those who follow the true religion. Thus, the bestowal of Divinity is that of obligation. As for the bestowal of Lordship, it includes such attributes as nurturance, protection, and the bestowal of gifts without remuneration.

In both of these bestowals of the True Lord, it is clear that He receives nothing in return from His servants when they follow Him. He does not benefit from their obedience to His commandments, nor is He harmed when rebellious souls struggle against Him. We therefore understand that He established the right Way and its necessary obligations for our sake alone. He gives us commands so that we might find happiness for ourselves, and peace in society. When He reveals His Will and Command to humankind, it is as if He were saying: 'I wish for you to be happy in your association with other people. Establish a clean, pure society, free from malice or envy or hypocrisy, in which all might live in love and peace. Seek out virtue and shun vice. I give you my right Way because you are my servants and my creations, and every creator wants what is best for his creations, deeming them to deserve better than depravity and wickedness.'

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- = religion is this: to testify that there is no Allah but the one true Allah, and that Muhammad is His Messenger. It means supplicating the Lord in prayer, giving obligatory alms to the poor, fasting during the month of *Ramadan*, and performing the pilgrimage if one has the means." The man affirmed the correctness of this response, then asked, "Speak to me of faith." The Prophet, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "Faith means believing in Allah, His angels, Writings and Messengers, and believing in the Day of Reckoning and the Final Judgment apportioned to every person, whether for good or ill." The man again affirmed the correctness of this response, and then said, "Speak to me of doing good works." The Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "This means serving Allah as if we could see Him. For even if we do not see Him, we know that He sees us and sees our works.'" *Al-Bukhari* extracted this account for its correctness, and later reaffirmed it as a correct saying.

That is why, we said: a wise man does not envy those who in any way are superior to him, and if he encounters an aggressor, he does not supplicate to Allah against that aggressor, but rather makes supplication for this aggressor. Moreover, if this wise man witnesses any kind of depravity, he acts to set it right, and if he meets non-Muslims, he wishes for them to become Muslims. Why? Because he is pleased when these non-Muslims become righteous, and he reaps the benefits of their following the right guidance, and enjoys the good that comes from this.

In sum, when Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Allah, the Mighty, the Wise...’ (*ash-Shura*: 3), it indicates that He is the one who reveals this message, the source of The Book, and the Giver of the Way; in other words, He is the One Who makes commands and obligations pertinent to the true religion.

The name for Allah *Glorified is He* Allah has been interpreted in several ways. Some believe it to be a proper name referring to the necessary existence of a deity as the object of worship. This makes sense if we take the root of the word Allah, ‘*a-l-h* in another form, *ma’luh*, meaning ‘that which is deified’. In the original sense, that which is deified is an object of worship. However, others claim that the name ‘Allah’ is indicative not of Allah’s necessary existence as the object of worship, but of Allah’s perfect Nature and Being, and to him belongs all the attributes of perfection. Indeed, He is the Strong, the Almighty, The Powerful, the Tremendous, the Merciful, The Wise, the All-Forgiving, the Bestower, and the All-Compelling Subduer. These are just a few of the names for the True Lord, all of them adjectives that describe aspects of the perfection contained in the name Allah. Hence Allah’s statement ‘...Call on Allah, or on the Lord of Mercy – whatever names you call Him, the best names belong to Him’ (*al-Isra*’: 110).

By revealing these names, the True Lord has taught us how to call upon Him in various times of need. Those desirous of knowledge call upon the Omniscient; those who want strength seek after the Strong; those who need wisdom say, ‘O You, the Wise, would that You give me wisdom!’ Those who strive for day-to-day sustenance supplicate to the Munificent for their daily bread, and those who want all of these things call upon Allah *Glorified is He* by the name ‘Allah,’ which includes all attributes of perfection.

As to the specific names found in this verse, we understand ‘*Al-‘Aziz* (The Mighty)’ to mean that Allah *Glorified is He* is All-Powerful in the obligations which He imposes on us. ‘The Mighty’ is He Who conquers and is never conquered, and Who is characterised by power, might, eternal riches and is in no need of His creation.

Then, He is ‘*Al-Hakeem* (The Wise)’, meaning that Allah’s Commands and Obligations are given to us in wisdom and with Divine preordination. It is important to recognise this because the Quran contains obligations and commandments which some consider arduous to obey. However, if we consider such painful tasks alongside the fruits and rewards of carrying out religious obligations, we find that they are easy to bear: the benefit obtained from obedience to Allah’s Commands outweighs any hardship therein.

Do you not see that you toil and exert effort, and then you reap the benefits of this hard work; do you not see that the preciousness of the outcome is commensurate with the effort exerted? In agriculture, for example, this idea is known as the law of the harvest. A farmer must grow radishes for many days before he is able to enjoy them with a meal; cucumbers must be cultivated for at least forty days before they can be picked and eaten; rice crops require several months before they can be utilised for food; and mango orchards take years to produce edible fruit.

Thus, if Allah *Glorified is He* requires something difficult of us, know that the fruits and results of obedience to Him will be commensurate with it.

Be sure that He who revealed these obligations to the Prophet is Mighty and Wise: what He requires of us is for our benefit alone, not His. He is truly the Wise, meaning his injunctions will lead us to a peaceful coexistence with our fellow men in society.

Satan understood this Divine might when he said: ‘...“I swear by Your might! I will tempt all [82] but Your true servants” [83]’ (*Sad*: 82-83). By ‘Your might’ Satan means to swear by His being free from need of His creatures, and by the fact that He has given us the choice whether to obey or disobey Him, and thus Allah says: ‘...let those who wish to believe in it do so, and let those who wish to reject it do so...’ (*al-Kahf*: 29). Otherwise, those

souls desired by You, Allah and partitioned off for Yourself, I ca not get near them: ‘...except Your devoted servants’ (*al-Hijr*: 40).

From this, we understand that the struggle is not between the True Lord and Satan; rather, it is between Satan and mankind. It is a struggle which extends from the time of Allah’s order to prostrate before Adam *peace be upon him* all the way to the Day of Resurrection. However, Satan’s foolishness is manifest in his conversation with the True Lord, then the conversation between him and Adam *peace be upon him*; for when he said: ‘...“I will lie in wait for them all on Your straight path”’ (*al-A’raf*: 16), he reveals his plan to tempt the progeny of Adam *peace be upon him*: by attempting to divert them from the correct Path in those areas where they are required to be obedient.

The True Lord taught us how to handle these temptations from our enemy, and how to reduce his guile: Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘If Satan should prompt you to do something, seek refuge with Allah...’ (*al-A’raf*: 200). As this verse indicates, we ward off the temptations of Satan by seeking refuge in Allah *Glorified is He* and in the mentioning of his name. Indeed, our enemy is known as *Al-Khannas* meaning the one who flees at the very mention of Allah’s name. Let us not forget this characteristic of Satan, when we are beset by his temptations.

Satan’s foolishness as well as his stultification are also made clear in his statement to Adam and Hawwa’ (Eve) *peace be upon them* as they conversed in Paradise: ‘...“Your Lord only forbade you this tree to prevent you becoming angels or immortals” ’ (*al-A’raf*: 20). If he had truly known that the tree spoken of was the tree of eternal life, he would have partaken of its fruit without hesitation, rather than asking whether Allah *Glorified is He* would delay eternal life until the resurrection. Adam *peace be upon him* also was heedless of this, hence Allah *Glorified is He* rightly says: ‘We also commanded Adam before you, but he forgot and We found him lacking in constancy’ (*Ta Ha*: 115). For this reason, we don not censure those who forget, since those entrusted with such commands are heedless by their very nature.

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

**All that is in the heavens and earth belongs to
Him: He is the Exalted, the Almighty [4]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 4)**

This means that Allah *Glorified is He* possesses everything in heaven and earth by right, and that vicegerents have no authority to administer or control those things. Allah *Glorified is He* alone is their rightful owner, and it is forbidden for anyone other than Him to exercise authority over them. A vicegerent is only allowed to exercise his authority over other finite phenomena below this level.

When we explore the meaning of this verse and other verses like this which appear throughout the Quran, we find that Allah *Glorified is He* says at one point: ‘To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth...’ (*ash-Shura*: 4) – repeating ‘*wa ma fi*’, ‘whatever is in’ before the heavens and the earth – and at another point: ‘And whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His...’ (*an-Nahl*: 52). The key difference between these verses has to do with emphasis on what is or is not shared between heavenly and earthly creations. There are created beings present in both the heavens and the earth, such as angels. However, there are also creatures found only in heaven, such as the higher angels; and some found only on earth, such as humans and the jinn. Thus, when Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth...’ (*ash-Shura*: 4), He differentiates between celestial and terrestrial creatures; whereas when he says ‘And whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His...’ (*an-Nahl*: 52), He mentions the creatures who exist in both (the heavens and the earth).

From this, we gather that the universe in which we live is not, in truth, owned or controlled by any other than Allah. The right of ownership belongs to Allah *Glorified is He* alone. Thus, we may not be dazzled by our possessions. Those things over which we exercise temporary dominion ultimately belong to Allah *Glorified is He*. Man is but a vicegerent, and not an owner. All the earth is a field upon which we are mere players, and over which we have no final authority: ‘To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatever is within them...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 120).

Scholars said that the letter *Lam* in *lahu* 'To Him' indicates possession, as in the sentence, *al-qalam lizayd* (the pen is Zayd's). This letter is also used to show that a thing has been set aside or partitioned specifically for someone or something, or that it belongs to a specific realm or domain. In the sentence, 'the rope is for the mare' we do not mean that a mare owns the rope. Rather, the signification here is that the rope belongs to the keeper of the mare, but it is specified for the mare.

In Allah's words: 'To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth' (*ash-Shura*: 4), the initial *Lam* takes both the sense of ownership, as well as the sense of something being specified for or exclusive to someone. The verse thus abridges its presentation of the predicate of this sentence: 'whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth,' which acts as the subject of the genitive possessive grammatical case; and 'To him' acting as the object of the genitive. The letter *Lam* here takes both of these meanings, thus clarifying the point that ownership belongs to Allah *Glorified is He* alone. In the sentence 'To Zayd belongs the pen,' the sense is only that the pen is for Zayd or is exclusively for his use; we might just as easily add: 'and to 'Umar'. However, *Ha* which is *damir al-gha'ib* (the pronoun of the hidden, absent or unseen) in *lahu* (to him) is a pronoun that refers to Allah *Glorified is He*. The absence, that the pronoun *Ha* indicates here, means not being seen or present to mortal senses. It is out of His Greatness that He is unseen that no vision can perceive him: 'No vision can take Him in, but He takes in all vision. He is the All Subtle, the All Aware' (*al-An'am*: 103).

Thus, it is out of His Greatness that He is unseen. We use terms whose meanings we know but cannot identify in the physical world. For example, we use the word 'truth' and say 'This is true!' or 'He is telling the truth', yet what does truth look like? This applies to other abstract words and concepts, like justice or love. We utilise these terms and their meanings all the time, but we still do not know how to define them. If we cannot perceive such terms, how can we expect to perceive the True Lord *Glorified is He*?

In another instance, He states: 'To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth...' (*ash-Shura*: 49) meaning the heavens and earth belong to Allah *Glorified is He* and that they represent a vessel in which other

things are contained: ‘To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth...’ (*ash-Shura*: 4).

It is worth mentioning that what is contained in the heavens is more precious than the heavens itself, just as those things found on the earth are more precious than the earth itself; so it goes with any vessel, which is generally less valuable than that which it contains.

As noted, then, everything in the heavens and earth belongs to Allah *Glorified is He* and is profitable for use by His vicegerents, on earth. The True Lord created these things for our benefit even before He created us such that He might prepare a universe, complete with all of life’s necessities, ready for our use. This point illustrates what was said previously about the bestowal of Allah’s Lordship.

Your Lord instructs and leads you through the right Way he sent you from heaven by means of His messengers *peace be upon them*. In addition, He secured for you provisions which keep you alive: so, He provided you with water that comes from the sky, and created for you the earth that produces different kinds of food and sustenance. He created rivers and streams from which you can drink, an air that you can breathe.

The Lord created an earth which provides humans with the three major elements necessary to preserve life. Out of His Wisdom He made your need for food different from your need for water and different from your need for water your need for air. A human can survive without food for a month, but he cannot live without water for more than a few days; as for air, a person cannot last longer than a few breaths without it.

Therefore, Allah made some people possess and have control over food and the means of nourishment; and if he ordains that you cannot find what to eat, you survive depending on the stores in your own body, until you find a way to nourish yourself. Then, He made less people possess and have control over water because the time a human survives without water is less than the time he survives without food. As for air, He did not make it anyone’s possession or under anyone’s control. Imagine if air were possessed by somebody and that someone became angry with you! You would have certainly died before you had the chance to obtain his forgiveness.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* granted humans those higher refinements and luxuries which enhance and enrich their life. Hence the Lord's statement, in reference to the sea: '...and bring out jewellery to wear...' (*an-Nahl*: 14). He also states: 'We have given you garments to cover your nakedness and as adornment for you...' (*al-A'raf*: 26). In terms of clothing, the most pressing need is to cover nakedness and protect the body, and only after this does the Lord take care of appropriate adornments and embellishments for human vestments.

The verse continues: '...the garment of Allah-consciousness is the best of all garments...' (*al-A'raf*: 26). Garments of this worldly life cover your 'awrah (parts of the body which nobody should see) and protect you in your mortal existence. By contrast, being conscious of Allah *Glorified is He* covers us up in this world and in the Hereafter, and it guarantees us a more lasting, eternal life.

All of these things which we have discussed – food sources, rivers, and the air we breathe, the ocean, and clothing – are things found on the earth, and which belong to Allah *Glorified is He*. If we look up, we find the air: a great blessing that contains various types of blessings within it. As we know, air is essential for sustaining life for all living species; but we also see that it provides a means for communication, as when pictures and sound move through it to create a television broadcast, for example.

Then, consider the sky and all that is in it: the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets, and the galaxies. These phenomena all belong to Allah *Glorified is He* who is the only One who exercises dominion over them.

The end of the verse under consideration reads: '...He is the Exalted, the Almighty' (*ash-Shura*: 4). The attribute *Al-'Aliyy* (Most Exalted) means that Allah *Glorified is He* is not only spatially above all else, but also that His Nature is higher than everything else in existence. Likewise, the name *Al-'Azhim* (the Almighty) does not necessarily mean that He is largest in size, but that He is greatest in His self-sustainability, power, and His characteristics of perfection

تَكَادُ السَّمَوَاتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِنْ فَوْقِهِنَّ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ
وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٥﴾

The heavens are almost broken apart from above as the angels proclaim the praises of their Lord and ask forgiveness for those on earth. God is indeed the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful [5] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 5)

Allah's words: '*takadu al-samawatu*', 'The heavens are almost...' (*ash-Shura*: 5) mean, very close to experiencing something. The word *yatafattarna* '...broken apart...' (*ash-Shura*: 5) means: to split, either out of awe for His Almightyness, as it is mentioned in the Hadith: 'heaven has squeaked, and it has right to do so...' ⁽¹⁾, or it can be a result of anger at the suggestion, put forth by some, that Allah *Glorified is He* took a son unto Himself.

His words: 'from above...' (*ash-Shura*: 5) may refer to that level of the skies which exists above the highest echelon of angels gathered in awe and exaltation of Allah *Glorified is He* or refer to those who are above the earth, where sinful humans who claimed that Allah has a son, reside; for the True Lord responds to this particular claim with the following: 'How terrible is this thing you assert' (*Maryam*: 89) meaning: something strange or abominable which reason cannot accept. Then, He says: 'it almost causes the heavens to be torn apart, the earth to split asunder, the mountains to crumble to pieces' (*Maryam*: 90).

Having offspring is sought either for help when one is overtaken by weakness in old age, or for maintaining one's name. However, it is unlawful to attribute such things to Allah *Glorified is He*? Moreover, it does not befit Him because He is in no need of offspring. Hence Allah's statement '...It does not befit the Lord of Mercy [to have offspring]' (*Maryam*: 92). In other words, the True Lord could very well take a son unto Himself if He desires,

(1) This Hadith was extracted by Imam Ahmad from his collection of traceable authorities Hadith 20539; by At-Tirmidhi, from his narrations of the sayings of The Prophet 2234; by Al-Bayhaqi, from his greater narrations of the sayings of The Prophet 52/7; and by Abd Ar-Razzaq from his compilation 440/9 – Hadith 17934. The rest of this Hadith is as follows: 'for in all the heavens, there is not a space even four fingers wide in which an angel does not bow his head in prostration before Allah *Glorified is He*.'

since He is omnipotent and nothing would prevent Him from doing what He wills, but this does not befit His Majesty and Highness. Since it does not befit Him, this proves His Perfection.

Elsewhere in the Quran, we find a similar argument in reference to His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘And We have not taught him poetry, nor is it meet for him; it is nothing but a reminder and a plain Quran...’ (*Ya Sin*: 69). This verse is a response to those disbelievers who accused the Prophet of being a mere poet rather than a messenger of Allah *Glorified is He*. The verse means that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not compose poetry not because he could not; for he had the capability and eloquence to do so, but it did not befit him to compose and say poetry, and it was not right for him to do so, because Allah *Glorified is He* was preparing him for a greater purpose than poetry.

This is evident in Allah’s statement: ‘...It does not befit the Lord of Mercy [to have offspring]’ (*Maryam*: 92) which confirms Allah’s ability to have a son if he wished; but this is something that does not befit Him, since Allah *Glorified is He* is free from those earthly needs and is too Exalted for such matters. This is why He states elsewhere: ‘Say [Prophet], “If the Lord of Mercy [truly] had offspring I would be the first to worship [them]”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 81); or in other words: ‘suppose He had offspring, I would be the first to believe in them.’

Continuing with the verse under consideration, the Lord says: ‘...as the angels exalt [Allah] with praise of their Lord...’ (*ash-Shura*: 5). Angels belong to the world of the Unseen, while the heavens and the earth are among tangible things (can be perceived by the senses). These tangible, visible creations are agitated and rent apart in response to that claim (of Allah having offspring). As for the angels, which are unseen, they exalt their Lord with praise and set Him above such a claim. Here, *tasbih* (the glorification of Allah) *Glorified is He* comes before *tahmid* (praise): it is first necessary to exalt Allah *Glorified is He* or to refute comparisons between Him and any other being, before praising Him for blessings and endowments. This is why the angels first exalt Allah, then, they offer Him praise.

Next, the verse reads: ‘...and ask forgiveness for those on earth...’ (*ash-Shura*: 5). The angels do not ask for their own forgiveness, but rather forgiveness for earth’s inhabitants. It is clear from this that the angels are sinless: if they were guilty of sin, they would ask for their own forgiveness from the very start. Moreover, the angels’ request for the Lord to forgive those who inhabit the earth is an all-inclusive plea, rendered on behalf of everyone on the planet, including unbelievers.

Elsewhere in the Quran we read that the angels: ‘...beg forgiveness for the believers...’ (*Ghafir*: 7), while, here, they ask forgiveness for ‘...those on earth...’ (*ash-Shura*: 5), that is, for everyone, their plea comprises a request for forgiveness and guidance for non-believers and for Allah *Glorified is He* to inspire them to have faith in Him.

There is a particular Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* which goes along with this point, ‘There is never a day wherein the sun rises, but are not visited by two angels. One of them says: “O Allah! Compensate (more) to the person who gives (in charity)”, while the other one says, “O Allah! Destroy the one who withholds (charity).”’⁽¹⁾

Scholars said: this petition to Allah *Glorified is He* for the destruction of the one who withholds charity does not contradict the angels’ plea for forgiveness for everyone on the earth. This is because the generous person who gives (in charity) is willing to give up his money and spends it in the cause of Allah; his love for Allah *Glorified is He* is therefore greater than his desire for riches. On the other hand, the one who withholds loves his money and is miserly. When the angelic herald in this Hadith wishes ill upon the miser in the form of destruction, it is because the angel wishes to free him from that which diverts the miser’s attention from Allah *Glorified is He* namely wealth. The

(1) *This is extracted for its established correctness 1010 as a Hadith narrated by Abu Hurayra. Regarding the explanation thereof An-Nawawi states, ‘The scholars note that here, “spending wealth” refers to riches spent while engaging in noble deeds of piety, as well as worthy, moral causes; such causes include almsgiving and freewill offerings, hospitable treatment of guests, and so on. A rich man spends his wealth on such activities so as not to be found guilty of withholding his riches from those in need, or from being called intemperate and wasteful. Likewise, the “miser” in this Hadith refers to one guilty of refusing to give of his means to the poor.’*

destruction of that wealth is therefore a blessing in the end, even though it may appear to be a major calamity. Thus, in both cases, the angelic supplication is an entreaty for that which is good.

Continuing with the verse, we read: '...Allah is indeed the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful' (*ash-Shura*: 5). We said that the invocative *ala* is a rhetorical device used to open a statement, or to call attention to what one wishes to say. A speaker is free to speak whenever he wants, whereas, a listener is not free or is not as free; for he may miss a part of the speech. That is why the speaker must occasionally alert the listener to what he says, in case the listener is not following the speaker's points. This is true especially with regard to important statements that the speaker wishes to make, and which he wants the listener to understand in their entirety. Thus, a speaker says *ala* at the beginning of a statement or speech, as if to say, 'Pay attention', or 'listen to my words'. We see this in the following line of poetry from the pre-Islamic (*jahili*) poet⁽¹⁾:

'Wake up from your sleep, O wine maid, with your bowl, and Give us our morning drink

And do not spare the wines of Al-'Andarina (a village in the Levant).'

⁽²⁾

Returning to the final part of this verse, we read: '...Allah is indeed the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful' (*ash-Shura*: 5). This is an appropriate note to end on, considering what we have discussed in terms of the angels' plea for forgiveness for those on the earth: it is as though Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to us, 'Pay attention, for He from whom forgiveness is requested is All-Forgiving, and a dispenser of mercy.' He is the All-Forgiving, Who pardons faults and erases the effects thereof; and He is the Most Merciful, the One Who, after pardoning sins, bestows grace sufficient to help keep us from committing future sins.

(1) 'Amr ibn Kulthum Abu Al-Aswad, member of the Banu Taghlab tribe and pre-Islamic poet (*extraordinaire*), he was born in the northern Arabian Peninsula, in one of the towns comprising the Rabi' area; he died on the Furat Peninsula in the year 39 BH. His people, the Banu Taghlab tribe, reigned among the desert tribes of the region when he was only a boy, and they flourished for many years. His most famous work of poetry is his hanging ode/ *Mu'allafa*, the opening line of which is quoted here by Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawi.

(2) This is the opening line of 'Amr ibn Kulthum's hanging ode, which is comprised of 125 lines in its entirety and written in the *wafir* (abundant) meter.

Then, the True Lord says:

وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهُ حَفِيفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿٦﴾

**As for those who take protectors other than Him, God is watching them; you are not responsible for them [6]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 6)**

His words: ‘...other than Him...’ (*ash-Shura*: 6) indicate anything other than Allah *Glorified is He* which some choose to worship. The word *awliya*’ (protectors) means: taking them as allies and worshipping them besides Allah. Some of them worshipped the sun, the moon, demons or angels. Next, the statement: ‘...Allah is watching them...’ (*ash-Shura*: 6) means that He is the One taking their actions into account, and that He is responsible for meting out their final reward or punishment. To Him is the final return.

As such, do not be sad O Muhammad, or kill yourself out of grief over them; for it is not incumbent on you to make them walk on the right way, but rather to proclaim the message to them. Allah says: ‘...you are not responsible for them’ (*ash-Shura*: 6). This means that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not *wakil* (responsible) for their actions. The word *wakil* in Arabic takes the noun form *fa’il*, which can signify either a subject, as in the word *rahim* (one who bestows mercy); or an object, like the word *qatil* (one who has been killed). In this verse, the word *wakil* acts in the latter sense. Only the delivery of the message is incumbent on you, O Muhammad, and upon Us is the account. Then, the True Lord says:

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّنُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَنُنذِرَ يَوْمَ الْجَمْعِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ فَرِيقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيقٌ فِي السَّعِيرِ ﴿٧﴾

So We have revealed an Arabic Quran to you, in order that you may warn the capital city and all who live nearby. And warn [especially] about the Day of Gathering, of which there is no doubt, when some shall be in the Garden and some in the blazing Flame [7] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 7)

This verse begins with Allah *Glorified is He* saying, *kadhalika* (so) or (in this way) referring to prior revelations given by Him – meaning: ‘like these

previous revelations, have We given you an Arabic Quran'. He says: '...We have revealed an Arabic Quran to you...' (*ash-Shura*: 7). It is called Quran because it is recited, and is also called *Al-Kitab* (the Book) because it was transmitted in lines organised into written form. The Quran is described here as being in the Arabic tongue because it was revealed through the language expounded by and belonging to the Arabs. As noted before, any language is a collection of terms through which the needs and desires of a people are expressed. We have also discussed how language is the 'daughter of imitation,' meaning that we learn to speak by imitating the sounds that we hear around us.

Language is not an inherent characteristic like blood type or physical gender, a point made clear by the fact an Arab child raised in a foreign land would speak the language of that land. This is so because language learning depends on imitating the sounds made by people around us when they speak a language. Even a native speaker encounters words which he does not know the meaning of; and the reason he does not know the meaning is that those words have never reached his ears before.

That is why we say: the best way to teach language is through *talqin* (the instructor says something and the student listens and imitates), a point which confirms the correctness of the following verse: 'And He taught Adam the names of all things...' (*al-Baqara*: 31). This shows that Allah *Glorified is He* is the original Teacher of mankind; otherwise, who would have instructed Adam *peace be upon him* in the letters and words of language, or in the names for all things?

Some orientalist have paused over the verse under consideration, pondering the description of the Quran as being in the Arabic tongue, when they know that it contains many words from other languages such as Latin, Persian and Ge'ez⁽¹⁾. In response, we say that the phrase: '...an Arabic Quran...' (*ash-Shura*: 7) means that the Quran was partly revealed in words which had circulated among the Arabs through interaction with various tongues and dialects, words which were in common usage before the revelation of the Quran. Because of this, a certain percentage of the words found in the Quran are not indigenous to the Arabic language of the time but which were

(1) The language of Abyssinia

nevertheless a part of the Arab people's lexicon. We may ask: how many are these words in comparison with the rest of the words of the Quran?

Thus, we can say that the Quran is an Arabic Quran, which goes along with Allah's statement: 'We have never sent a messenger who did not use his own people's language to make things clear for them...' (*Ibrahim*: 4). By this, He means that the message of a religion is sent to people in their own tongue so that they might receive it and understand it; otherwise, it would be impossible for Allah's message to be proclaimed.

If you raise the question: how is this when Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to all people of every time period and geographical location? We say: this is the responsibility of the *ummah* (the people) of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* after he dies. It was and is incumbent upon that community to learn to speak other languages, and to bring the message of Islam to the peoples who speak those languages, in whatever corner of the globe they are to be found. Muhammad was the seal of the prophets and the last of Allah's messengers on the earth. As for taking the message of Islam to the nations of the earth, this responsibility necessarily has fallen upon the Islamic community.

The Quran was revealed in the Arabic language because Allah *Glorified is He* chose the Arabs to carry His message to all people. We have discussed this idea previously in terms of the wisdom of choosing an unlettered man from an illiterate society to be the Messenger of Allah *Glorified is He*. The Quran is inimitable among Arabs due to its sublime style and pronunciation; Arabs have the unique privilege of reading it in the original language, and they may thus appreciate its unrivalled linguistic magnificence. Likewise, it is inimitable among non-Arab peoples because of its transcendent meaning, even when translated into other tongues. In either case, it is one of Allah's unique signs and wonders which appear to humankind from time to time, and which inspire awe and reverence for Him.

If Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were an educated man in a community of civilisation, what would the people of the world say, taking into consideration the multitude of infidels, obstinate people and atheists? By Allah, if this were the case, they would have said that Islam is a mere cultural

leap forward, common to other nations. For this reason, we say: illiteracy is a defect in any person except for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and it is actually an honour. Why? This is because it shows that the great learning and culture which rested upon the Prophet came from on high. It proves that wisdom and knowledge ultimately stem from that loftiest of sources, the True Lord *Glorified is He*.

What is astonishing is that there are enemies of Islam who claim that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was in fact, a learned man. They also aver that it was he who wrote the Quran. Glory be to Allah! Are you (people who made this argument) more prejudiced in favour of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* than his followers? The Quran is clear in its refutation of this claim: 'You never recited any Scripture before We revealed this one to you; you never wrote one down with your hand. If you had done so, those who follow falsehood might have had cause to doubt' (*al- 'Ankabut*: 48).

Thus, in spite of his illiteracy, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came bearing the news of the correct Path that subjugated all civilisations of the world, and to which the two greatest human civilisations, at that time, were subjugated: the Persian Empire in the East and the Roman Empire in the West. However, this was not forced obeisance, but rather a willing recognition of Islam's superior methods, supreme concepts, that provide a framework for daily life and organise the society as a whole, the striking manner in which it was presented, as well as the solutions it offers for those immoral and harmful behaviours which prevailed among their respective civilisations.

Continuing on with the verse under consideration, Allah *the Most High* says: '...in order that you may warn the mother of cities and all who live nearby...' (*ash-Shura*: 7). *Indhar* (to warn or to caution of something bad) means to tell someone about it before it happens, in order to give that person a chance to avoid it or to make necessary preparations for it.

The epithet 'the mother of cities' (*ash-Shura*: 7) refers to Mecca since it is *umm al-qura* (the mother of cities) or the root and foundation of all other cities and villages. This is because it is the location on earth in which *awwala bayt* (the first temple) was placed for people. Since Adam *peace be upon him* is a person among the people, then, *awwala bayt* was placed there before Adam

peace be upon him. Thus, it is correct that the angels were the ones who placed the temple in Mecca.

His words: ‘...and all who live nearby...’ (*ash-Shura*: 7) refer to those villages, tribes, and all other Arab peoples living within the vicinity of Mecca. Since Mecca is the mother and foundation of all cities, the tribe of Quraysh enjoyed special prominence among tribes on the Arabian Peninsula, since it had the distinct honour of service in and maintenance of the temple. Members of Quraysh were the established custodians of the temple, receiving people from other tribes as they came to Mecca during the season of the pilgrimage. It was their job to ensure security, safety and food stores. For this reason the caravans of Quraysh enjoyed protection and care in other parts of the Arabian Peninsula as they made their summer and winter journeys.

We see that service in the temple is what afforded Quraysh dignity and status among other Arabian tribes. Hence Allah’s saying: ‘[He did this] to make the Quraysh feel secure [1] secure in their winter and summer journeys. [2] So let them worship the Lord of this House: [3] who provides them with food to ward off hunger, safety to ward off fear [4]’ (*Quraysh*: 1-4). Their supremacy was a result of their authority in administering the temple worship, their proximity to the temple itself and the services rendered by them when people came to the temple on the pilgrimage. As a corollary, if the temple had been destroyed, the special privileges enjoyed by Quraysh would have come to an end, and they would have lost this prestige and high status.

Returning to the verse, Allah *the Most High* states: ‘...And warn [especially] about the Day of Gathering, of which there is no doubt...’ (*ash-Shura*: 7). In other words: to warn them of this final day, namely the Day of Resurrection. The gathering, on that day, has several aspects: that day unites body and spirit; brings together the angels of the higher part of heaven and human beings; brings together the oppressor and the oppressed, as well as those who follow and those who lead.

If we look more closely at the phrasing in this statement, ‘...And warn [especially] about the Day of Gathering...’ (*ash-Shura*: 7), we find that the direct object of the Arabic verb *tundhira* (warn) is left unsaid. In fact, this verb takes two objects, as in the following verse: ‘If they turn away, say, “I

have warned you about a blast like the one which struck 'Ad and Thamud'" (*Fussilat*: 13). He said: '*andhartukum sa'ikah*', '...I have warned you about a blast...' (*Fussilat*: 13). Here, he mentions the direct object 'you' and the indirect object 'a blast'. In the verse under discussion, He mentions the danger warned against, in general, and does not mention the object of *andhir* (warn). Why? This is because it will be clarified elsewhere, as in another verse: 'Warn them [Prophet] of the ever-approaching Day...' (*Ghafir*: 18). Here, the pronoun 'them' refers to unbelievers, which group of people represents the direct object; and 'the ever-approaching,' or the Day of the Gathering, represents the indirect object.

The phrase '...of which there is no doubt...' (*ash-Shura*: 7) means that there is certainty about the coming of the Day of the Assembly, '...when a party will be in Paradise and a party in the blazing Fire (Hell)' (*ash-Shura*: 7). This last statement from the previous verse refers to the law of reward and punishment established by Allah. Where there is *taklif* (obligation), there is obedience and disobedience. Those who obey shall be rewarded, and those who disobey shall be punished. This same code of living applies even in the daily lives of human beings, who have established their own system of reward and punishment in their societies. Likewise, on the day that is sure to come – the Day of the Assembly, all people shall be divided into two groups, one in paradise and the other in the fires of hell.

Examining the style of this final statement, we find that the verse employs what is known as *al-ihitbak* (reciprocal ellipsis), which is a rhetorical device that omits predictable words through context clues, such as contrast. An example of this is Allah's statement: 'There has already been a sign for you in the two armies that met (in combat)...' (*Al-Imran*: 13). In this verse, the righteous, or those who fight in Allah's Cause, are contrasted with those who fight for Satan (*Iblis*). Contemplating this Quranic style, we find that the word 'believers' is omitted because it is indicated by the phrase '...one was fighting in Allah's Cause...' (*Al-Imran*: 13); and the description of the opposite army 'one was fighting in Satan's cause' is omitted because it is connoted by the phrase '...and as for the other (they) were disbelievers...' (*Al-Imran*: 13). Each description serves, as it were, to cancel out that of its opposite. This technique, as noted, comprises the rhetorical device of reciprocal ellipsis.

Moreover, Allah's saying: '...when a party will be in Paradise and a party in the blazing Fire (Hell)' (*ash-Shura*: 7) exhibits an initial process of separating the righteous from the wicked, after gathering all souls on the Day of the Assembly. This separation after collection is another feature of the Quranic style which involves the assembly of souls on the Day of the Gathering, followed by a process of sifting believers from unbelievers, and ending with a final division and distribution of reward and punishment. We see this, for example, in the chapter of *Hud*, where Allah *Glorified is He* states: 'On the Day when it comes, no person shall speak except by His (Allah's) Leave. Some among them will be wretched and (others) blessed' (*Hud*: 105). The process of separation after collection is found in: 'Some among them will be wretched and (others) blessed' (*Hud*: 105). Then there is the process of division and the designation of groups: 'As for those who are wretched, they will be in the Fire, sighing in a high and low tone. They will dwell therein for all the time that the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord wills. Verily, your Lord is the doer of what He wills. And those who are blessed, they will be in Paradise, abiding therein for all the time that the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord wills, a gift without an end⁽¹⁾' (*Hud*: 106-108).

However, why does this verse include such a description of sifting between believers and unbelievers in the statement: '...when a party will be in Paradise and a party in the blazing Fire (Hell)' (*ash-Shura*: 7)? The answer is that the True Lord *Glorified is He* fashioned His creatures and endowed them with free will after He offered them the trust (*amana*) of carrying moral responsibility. This is made clear in the following verse: '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 was unjust and ignorant (of its results)' (*al-Ahzab*: 72). The meaning here is that Allah offered the choice of carrying this trusted responsibility to all creation, which refused it in fright at the seriousness of the charge. Aspects of creation such as the heavens and earth, therefore, preferred to be non-free

(1) The Arabic phrase *ghayra majdhudh* (unceasing, without being cut off) derives from the verb *jadhdha* (to cut off, break or divide). Therefore, Allah's saying: '...a gift without an end (*majdhudh*)...' (*Hud*: 108) means unceasing, never to be cut off (*Al-Qamus Al-Qawim*, vol. 1, p. 119).

willed, to be acted upon in whatever way their Lord wills. All except humans and jinn took upon themselves the trusted responsibility, thus becoming agents, endowed with the power to will and to act.

Here, we also note the phrase ‘...verily, he was unjust and ignorant (of its results)...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 72) meaning unjust to himself; while ‘ignorant’ means unaware of the consequences of the decision to carry the trusted responsibility of free will and reason. Clearly, one could be trustful of his ability at the time of undertaking the charge, but no longer so at the time of fulfilment as circumstance may come between the person and fulfilling the charge entrusted to him. Since humankind has chosen to take upon themselves the responsibility of free will, not fully aware of the implications of that choice, they must be asked about the charge entrusted to them and be held accountable for their actions. And depending on whether they have preserved or squandered the trust of having free will, a final reward or punishment has become necessary for them, dividing between those who deserve paradise and those who deserve hell.

وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَهُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ يُدْخِلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ
فِي رَحْمَتِهِ وَالْظَّالِمُونَ مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ

If God had so pleased, He could have made them a single community, but He admits to His mercy whoever He will; the evildoers will have no one to protect or help them [8] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 8)

The general meaning of this verse is that Allah's Will is measured by the same absolute standard for everyone and that we should not, therefore, be surprised at the final division between the righteous and the wicked. If Allah so wished, He could force all people to believe in Him, leaving no choice for anyone but to follow His Path. Rather, He distinguished between coerced and voluntary faith out of love. The True Lord *the Exalted* wants devoted, believing hearts, not a forced appearance of piety. We have already seen this point illustrated with the classic example of a man who employs two servants, one free to move as he pleases, and the other tied to his master with a rope. When the master orders his two servants to do something, which of the two carries out his command out of true obedience and love?

Thus, when the True Lord *Glorified is He* offered the trust of reason and free will to all creation, He confirmed two parallel ways of coming to Him: non-free willed out of power and free willed out of love. So Allah established His Power and Dominion over creation by making a part of it, which are the heavens, the earth and all created beings except mankind and jinn, faithful and obedient to His Command by their very nature. They surrendered their choice to the Will of Allah. Second, Allah established love for Him by granting humans and jinn the capability of choosing Him. Consequently, they believed in Allah out of love, although they were capable of refusing to believe.

The statement ‘...but He admits whom He wills into His Mercy...’ (*ash-Shura*: 8) refers to the believers. They shall enter paradise through Allah’s Grace and Mercy rather than their good works alone. Their good works are the necessary means for entry to paradise. Following this, we are given a vision of the opposite group: ‘...and the wrongdoers have not any protector or helper’ (*ash-Shura*: 8). The meaning here is that evildoers, or unbelievers, will enter hell, for hell is the established consequence of evil deeds done on the earth.

Allah’s saying ‘...has not any protector or helper...’ (*ash-Shura*: 8) means there is no close friend or confidant to protect and defend them; ‘...or helper...’ carries a similar meaning, which means complete lack of help or support even from far away. No one, on seeing them overpowered, shall sympathise with them and offer help.

In the next verse, the True Lord *the Most High* goes into further explanation as to why this punishment is meted out to the wrongdoers. They have rejected the worship of the One True Lord and sought protection in sources other than Allah. So, they have deserved abandonment.

أَمِ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ ۚ قَالَ اللَّهُ هُوَ الْوَلِيُّ وَهُوَ يُحْيِي الْمَوْتِ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٩﴾

How can they take protectors other than Him? God alone is the Protector; He gives life to the dead; He has power over all things [9] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 9)

After affirming that the wrongdoers have no protector or source of succour, the True Lord *the Exalted* puts forth the question: ‘Or have they taken protectors [or allies] besides Him?...’ (*ash-Shura*: 9) This is clearly an

istifham istinkari (an interrogative that denotes disapproval and rebuke) where Allah asks, by way of censure, those wrongdoers if they have protectors that He does not know about! Since they cannot have protectors or guardians besides Allah, why have they not taken Him as their Protector? Or else the meaning could be that their taking refuge in other than Allah should have induced them to think over the matter and reconsider their position.

Indeed, as the rest of the verse confirms: ‘...But Allah – He is the Protector...’ (*ash-Shura*: 9) meaning that He is the True Supporter Who can provide relief to whoever needs it. Then, He states: ‘...and it is He Who gives life to the dead, and it is He Who has power over all things’ (*ash-Shura*: 9). This part of the verse mentions two exclusive Abilities of Allah: the ability to raise the dead and His Absolute Power over everything, neither of which applies to anything to which the wrongdoers resort for protection. These two characteristics describe Allah alone. Throughout the Quran we often find them accompanied by the personal pronoun of emphasis *huwa* (he) which is not required in Arabic for the meaning to be clear. This pronoun serves to emphasise that Allah uniquely possesses certain characteristics or powers. For this reason, the verse states: ‘...and it is He Who (*huwa*) gives life to the dead, and it is He Who (*huwa*) has power over all things’ (*ash-Shura*: 9).

Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘And that it is He Who makes [one] laugh and weep and that it is He who causes death and gives life’ (*an-Najm*: 43-44). These actions – causing laughter and weeping, granting life and death – cannot be performed by anyone other than Allah. We understand ‘...it is He Who makes [one] laugh and weep...’ to mean that Allah has placed within humans the instinct to laugh and cry. The fact that all people, from all nationalities and cultures, have these instincts is evidence that the impulse to laugh comes from Allah. Laughter is the same regardless of one’s culture; an Arab laughs in the same way as an Indian or a Russian person does. The same can be said about weeping. So, it follows that it is an instinct placed in mankind by Allah. Life and death also belong to Allah alone, and no other than Allah has the power to give or take life.

In another context, life and death are stated by our master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* among the blessings that Allah bestowed upon him:

‘...Who has created me, and it is He Who guides me. And it is He Who feeds me and gives me to drink. And when I am ill, it is He who cures me. And Who will cause me to die, and then will bring me to life (again)’ (*ash-Shu‘ara’*: 78 - 81).

Throughout the Quran, the personal pronoun *huwa* (he) is added when discussing acts about which there could be doubt as to whether they are done exclusively by Allah; so the independent personal pronoun *huwa* (he) appears in order to emphasise that the act is exclusive to Allah, as in the statement ‘...it is He Who (*huwa*) guides me’ (*ash-Shu‘ara’*: 78). The emphasis is placed here because guidance can come to a person through a human agent. Also, regarding the statement that Allah alone ‘...is He Who feeds me and gives me to drink...’ (*ash-Shu‘ara’*: 79) since a father who provides food and drink to his children may read this and think it applies to him. It is the same with the next verse: ‘And when I am ill, it is He who cures me’ (*ash-Shu‘ara’*: 80), as some may think that healing lies in the hands of doctors. For this reason, all these verses contain the personal pronoun of emphasis *huwa* (he) to underscore the fact that these actions, which are performed through humans, fall within Allah’s Power. As for statements referring to actions or powers belonging only to Allah, they do not contain the personal pronoun of emphasis, since only Allah, without partners or rivals, can carry out such deeds. As in Allah’s statement ‘And Who will cause me to die, and then will bring me to life (again)’ (*ash-Shu‘ara’*: 81) in which the personal pronoun *huwa* does not appear.

Here, bringing the dead back to life refers to the resurrection in the Hereafter. For example, we read about this power in the story of ‘Uzair (Ezra) *peace be upon him*⁽¹⁾ told in the Quran: ‘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?”’

(1) *Uzayr (Ezra) peace be upon him was a wise and faithful slave of Allah. In his book Qasas Al-Anbiya’ (Stories of the Prophets), Ibn Kathir states: ‘The most well-known opinion concerning ‘Uzair (Ezra) was that he was one of the Israelite prophets. He came at a time between Dawud (David) and Sulaiman (Solomon), and Zakaryya (Zechariah) and Yahya (John the Baptist). When there was no one left among the Jews who knew the Torah by heart, Allah revealed it to the mind of ‘Uzair (Ezra) peace be upon him who recited it to the Israelites from memory, having never studied it from a book. For this reason, the Jews claimed that ‘Uzair (Ezra) was the son of Allah.’*

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 Able to do all things" (*al-Baqara*: 259).

We humans feel the passage of time through events. Without events, we cease to feel that time has elapsed. For this reason, after being dead for a hundred years 'Uzair (Ezra) *peace be upon him* replied on being brought to life, 'I have remained a day or part of a day.' So in order to show the correctness of his view that it was a day or part of a day, the True Lord *the Exalted* ordered 'Uzair (Ezra) to look at the food he had with him. When he looked at it, he found that it had not rotted or changed with time. And in order to prove that 'Uzair (Ezra) *peace be upon him* had actually been dead for one hundred years, Allah told 'Uzair (Ezra) *peace be upon him* to look at his donkey that had died and rotted down to the bare bones, something which would only be possible after one hundred years.

Returning to the verse at hand, the Most High Allah states: '...and it is He Who has power over all things' (*ash-Shura*: 9). This is a clear indication of the Absolute Power which Allah possesses, testified to by the presence of many cosmic signs in the heavens, the earth and living beings.

Indeed, Allah alone is powerful over everything. He has shown us examples of His Ability to bring the dead back to life on earth – such as the story of 'Uzair (Ezra) *peace be upon him* whom Allah caused to be dead for one hundred years – as evidence of that same Power to resurrect the dead in the Hereafter.

Another example comes to us in the following verse: 'Have you not considered those who left their homes in many thousands, fearing death? Allah said to them, "Die"; then He restored them to life. And Allah is full of bounty to the people, but most of the people do not show gratitude' (*al-Baqara*: 243).

It is because of the Lord's Greatness and His Absolute Power over all things that He bestows a token of His Power upon His creatures. Hence, for example, the story of our master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* who was granted the power of restoring life to the dead through Allah's Will. In

our scope as humans, when, for example, a strong person sees a weak person trying to lift a burden, he helps him and uses his strength to carry the weight for him. But in the end, the weak person he has helped will remain weak. On the other hand, when the True Lord *the Exalted* gives of His Strength to one of His servants, He makes him able to do what he wants himself. The difference, then, is that when Allah endows His creatures with aspects of His Power, those powers become subjective.

Let us take another example from the Quran to drive this point home. In the chapter of *al-Baqara*, we encounter in the story of our master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* his request for Allah to show him the process of raising the dead: ‘...“My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead.” [Allah] said, “Have you not believed?” He said, “Yes, but [I ask] only that my heart may be satisfied”’ (*al-Baqara*: 260). That is, my Lord I am a confident believer, but I want to be more assured and bring myself to a higher level of faith. Some orientalist scholars have paused over this verse and wondered whether Ibrahim’s (Abraham) entreaty for a sign from Allah to ease his heart does not reflect a lack of faith on Ibrahim’s (Abraham) part; seeing that faith, by definition, includes being clear and tranquil in heart over things unseen or unknown.

But this is not the case. Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* did not say, ‘My Lord, can You raise the dead?’ Rather, he said, ‘My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead...’ (*al-Baqara*: 260). Evidently, he was a believer in resurrection and in Allah’s Ability to raise the dead, but he wanted to know how it happened. He wanted to reach certitude about the manner in how it was done, rather than to affirm this attribute to Allah *Glorified is He*. In the same way, were I to ask you: ‘How did you build that mosque?’ Am I doubting the fact that the mosque has been built? Of course not, since it is already there. I just want to know how it has been constructed.

The True Lord *the Exalted* gave a logical response to His Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* given that the act of raising the dead can best be explained by its practice, rather than discoursing on the subject. Allah *Glorified is He* allowed Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* to raise the dead himself, giving Ibrahim (Abraham) the chance to participate in the act of resurrection, and, moreover, to see it with his own eyes. ‘...He (Allah) said, “Take four

birds, then cause them to incline towards you”...’ (*al-Baqara*: 260). That is, inspect them closely for distinguishing marks, and then slaughter them; ‘...“then [after slaughtering them] put on each hill a portion of them; then call them, they will come [flying] to you in haste”...’ (*al-Baqara*: 260). As noted, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* himself was thus permitted to perform the act of raising the dead himself which indicates the greatness of The Creator *Glorified is He*.

Accordingly, Allah’s saying: ‘...and it is He Who gives life to the dead...’ (*ash-Shura*: 9) means that the power of resurrection belongs solely to Allah. Even if He sometimes imparts that power to whichever of His servants He pleases, He is still the original and rightful Possessor of this ability. Likewise with the statement: ‘...and it is He Who has power over all things’ (*ash-Shura*: 9). Certain creatures possess certain abilities or powers, such as humans or angels, whom some people worshipped instead of Allah. However, we know that the abilities possessed by these angels, and indeed all other creatures, are limited, and that angelic power to do one thing will not suffice to carry out something else. This is not so with the True Lord *Glorified is He* Whose Power and Authority are absolute. There is nothing He cannot do. His Power over all things is absolute.

وَمَا أَخْلَفْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَحُكْمُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ
 دَلِيلُكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبِّي عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ

**Whatever you may differ about is for God to judge.
 [Say], ‘Such is God, my Lord. In Him I trust and to
 Him I turn [10] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 10)**

Here, ‘to differ’ refers to a lack of harmony or disagreement of opinions on a particular matter, with those who hold those opinions being divided into two or more opposing groups, each in support of its own views and in opposition to the others. Such dispute or disagreement may show up in a serious and fruitful discussion in which all participants are interested in discovering the truth; or in a vain argument in which people resort to lying and obstinacy, leading to no benefit whatsoever.

For this reason, the True Lord *the Exalted* instructs us as to how to resolve differences of opinion when they arise; we should refer ourselves to

Allah's Judgment on the matter. Thus, when contention arose concerning the nature of the soul, those who held different views on the matter asked Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about it. So Allah *the Exalted* revealed the following instruction: 'And they ask you (O Muhammad) concerning the soul. Say, "The soul is one of the things, the knowledge of which is only with my Lord. And of knowledge, you (mankind) have been given only a little"' (*al-Isra'*: 85).

In this way, the True Lord *Glorified is He* taught us the proper recourse in situations where opinions differ. We are also told not to draw hasty conclusions, but to seek out the truth of the matter with all objectivity. Indeed, there are situations in which people with seemingly different viewpoints are actually in agreement, even though they might not be aware of it. Take the Battle of the Trench, for example, in which the Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayzha laid siege to Yathrib (Medina). After the armies of Quraysh had returned to Mecca, and the Jews had gone back to their encampments, the True Lord made it known to His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that the Jews were responsible for starting the war and igniting this crisis. He also made it clear that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* should go to the Jews and not take off the mantle and duty of battle. For this reason, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* went to his army, who were freshly returned from fighting, and said to them: 'Anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day should not offer 'Asr (afternoon) Prayer except at Banu Qurayzha.'⁽¹⁾

He meant by this to keep ready for the battle. The Companions, therefore, redirected themselves to the location where Banu Qurayzha had made camp. However, on their way to the Jewish encampment, there was contention as to the meaning of the Prophet's instructions. It was getting near the end of the time allotted for 'Asr (afternoon) Prayer; therefore, a group of the Companions said that they should pray right then before its time was over. The other group of the Companions said that they should not offer it until they had reached

(1) *An agreed upon Hadith narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (no. 4119) and Muslim in his Sahih in the Book of Al-Jihad wa As-Sayr (p. 69) from the Hadith of Ibn 'Umar Allah be pleased with them both that the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him said to them on the day the Jewish Confederates retreated: 'None of you should offer the Zhuhr (noon) Prayer except at Banu Qurayzha's place.' According to another version, he said 'Asr Prayer.*

Banu Qurayzha, as Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had commanded. In this way, the Companions were divided in their opinion over how they understood the Prophet's command, where some held that the focus was on the timing of the prayer, and they therefore offered the 'Asr Prayer on the way to Banu Qurayzha. The others insisted that the place where they were to perform the 'Asr Prayer was the focus of the command, hence they waited and did not pray until they reached Banu Qurayzha. On meeting up with Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they presented this difference of opinion to him. When he heard their disagreement, he affirmed that both views were correct, offering objection to neither group's opinions on the matter.

This is because the disagreement was in the letter of the law, rather than the spirit. The Companions did not realise that both groups were correct, and that they were in fact in agreement with one another. Thus, when differing opinions arise over issues, as we see in this example, we should refer matters back to Allah and His Messenger. We should seek an objective solution without blind insistence upon one viewpoint or another. This is with regards to disagreements among believers.

This also applies to the people of the Book, namely the Jews and Christians. Refer any disagreements with them to Allah. They believe in holy books, respectively, the Taurat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel). In fact, both of them contain affirmations pointing to Muhammad as the Last of the Messengers, as well as heralds of his coming, his characteristics, and marks of his prophethood. We see evidence of this when we consider, for example, the fact that many people of the Book believed in him after he was commissioned with prophethood. Therefore, you should refer your disagreements with them to Allah in order to keep from continuing down a path of stubborn argumentation and disputation.

Continuing with the verse, the statement '...the decision thereof is with Allah...' (*ash-Shura*: 10) also includes the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* since he represents Allah in making religious pronouncements. Allah gave him the right of passing rulings, as evinced by the following verse: '...and whatsoever the Messenger (Muhammad) gives you, take it; and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain (from it)...' (*al-Hashr*: 7). This right was a distinction which had never been granted to any of Allah's Messengers before

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Their duty was only to convey the message. As for our master the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* he was given the special privilege of making rulings. Therefore, in response to disputants who demanded evidence that the morning prayer should be two *rak'as* (units of prayer), the noon prayer four, and the sunset prayer three, the following verse provides such an evidence: ‘...and whatsoever the Messenger (Muhammad) gives you, take it; and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain (from it)...’ (*al-Hashr*: 7).

So by referring controversial matters to the True Lord *the Exalted* and submitting them to what Allah and His Messenger have said, we can settle any disputes or contentions that may arise.

One can have no objection to seeking the arbitration of a Supreme Power that unites the hearts in serenity and satisfaction with Allah’s Decision. Do you not see that sometimes you may refuse the judgment of a human like you, even if it is right? But when the judgment is from Allah, it is accepted without objections.

Continuing on, let us consider the statement: ‘...Such is Allah, my Lord in Whom I put my trust...’ (*ash-Shura*: 10). The Arabic word *dhalikum* translated as ‘such is’ is a demonstrative pronoun used for glorification or aggrandisement. *Dha* is the determiner, indicating that which is being referred to; *li* or the letter *Lam* connotes the dimension or proportion of that reference; and *ku* or the letter *Kaf* is an element of address. You say: ‘...Such is Allah, my Lord...’ with pride in the Power of Allah and glory in ascribing yourself to Him recognising that He is above anything and everything which the human mind can imagine. As noted, the word *Rabb* (Lord or Sustainer) denotes the role of provider and caretaker, and the one from whom all grace and blessings flow. For this reason, we trust Him in all things. Likewise with the statement ‘...and to Him I turn back’ (*ash-Shura*: 10) which means returning to Him for the final accounting and reward in the Hereafter.

When I say: ‘...Such is Allah, my Lord...’ (*ash-Shura*: 10), I am glorying in and boasting of *Rububiyyah* (Allah’s Lordship) which provides direction and blessings. I am also glorying in and boasting of *Uluhiyyah* (state of being Allah/right of worship) which enjoins obligations and duties, which are, in fact, part and parcel of direction and care. The necessary requirement of any

care and protection given to humans is that it provides them with all elements necessary for a happy existence. However, a happy existence cannot be fully attained in this world, which is temporary and eventually passes away. For this reason, true providence provides something lasting and enduring, namely the Hereafter, the reward of which is never-ending. The next life is enduring and everlasting. Its joys and delights never cease. They shall never become exhausted and I shall never die and leave them behind.

There are some who claim that providing care and direction is in terms of physical needs. While this is true, it also encompasses spiritual needs. Therefore, the Most High Allah says: '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). Here, what does the phrase '...that which gives you life...' signify, seeing as those being addressed are alive and capable of hearing? Obviously, the intended meaning is a life other than this earthly, material one. Indeed, the implication here is a life of spiritual and moral excellence, an eternal life which does not pass away and from which we will never depart by death.

For this reason, the righteous doctrine, which provides the means to obtaining this everlasting life, is called *ruh* (spirit). Hence the following verse, which appears later on in the chapter of *ash-Shura*: 'And thus We have revealed to you a *Ruh* (spirit) of Our Command...' (*ash-Shura*: 52). Yes indeed, a life-giving book that endows you with an eternal afterlife, whereas that first, mortal spirit which has been breathed into us can only provide temporal, earthly life. For this reason, the angel who came down with this vivifying doctrine is called *ruh*. 'The Trustworthy *Ruh* (Spirit – Angel Jibril (Gabriel)) has brought it down' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 193).

Thus we may say that the life that we ultimately seek is not the temporal, earthly existence we currently live in. Rather, the mortal realm is a stepping stone, a means by which to arrive at an existence higher than this terrestrial one. And in order to obtain that better, choicer existence, we must adhere to the Law provided by the One Who will ultimately bestow upon us eternal life.

To sum up, the section of this verse that states '...Such is Allah, my Lord...' (*ash-Shura*: 10) connects two aspects of Allah's Nature. On the one hand, it expresses His Role as the Sole God worthy of worship, providing commandments

and religious obligations; and on the other hand, it emphasises His role as a Sustainer Who guides, educates, provides, and confers blessings on us.

It is interesting to consider the diction used by the Quran to describe the issue of *tawakkul* (putting one's trust in Allah). In the phrase, '...my Lord in Whom I put my trust (*'alayhi tawakkaltu*)...', we see a style that the grammarians call *qasr* (restriction) in which the propositional phrase 'in Whom' is placed before the verb, 'I put my trust' (*tawakkalt*). The restrictive clause limits the meaning of the subject clause. It here underscores the fact that Allah is the only One in Whom trust is placed. If the sentence instead was, 'I placed my trust in Him,' it would include other people or things on which we can rely. Therefore, this choice of style confines and restricts trust and reliance to Allah alone.

Some scholars have said, regarding putting complete trust in Allah, that it is the source of funds for those who have run out of means. It is when humans let go of their own power and strength and entrust themselves to the power and strength of their Lord and Creator. Allah *the Exalted* has placed ways and means for everything, which, when they become lacking, we should turn to the Causer of everything. The Quran says: 'Is He [not best] who responds to the desperate one when he calls upon Him and removes evil...?' (*an-Naml*: 62). In this verse the word 'desperate' refers to those who have exhausted all the available means. Rather than falling into despair and succumbing to the pressures of circumstances, such a distressed person instead reminds himself that he has a Lord and Provider who is above all means. He is the Originator of all things, and He will not forsake me when I resort to Him.

We have previously discussed the story of our master Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when he was overtaken by Pharaoh and his soldiers, who surrounded Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and his followers at the edge of the sea. There appeared to be no escape, to the point that those who were with Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said to him: 'We are sure to be overtaken...' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 61). As far as they could tell, the reality of the situation was that the sea was behind them, their enemies in front of them, and they had nowhere to flee. That was the limit of their vision; whereas Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had other expectations from his Lord. Hence the response to their fears: 'Nay, verily! With me is my Lord, He will guide me' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 62).

Such is the reliance and confidence that comes from trust in Allah, the reliance shown by distressed people who have lost all means of help, and who have no other recourse than to seek refuge in Allah. Hence the True Lord's response to Musa came as a dazzling, eternal miracle: 'Then We inspired to Musa (Moses), "Strike with your staff the sea," and it parted, and each portion was like a great towering mountain. And We advanced thereto the pursuers. And We saved Musa (Moses) and those with him, all together. Then We drowned the others' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 63-66).

The style of *qasr* (restriction) is also employed in Allah's statement: '...and to Him I turn back' (*ash-Shura*: 10) in which the prepositional phrase '...to Him...' is placed before the verb. This restricts the meaning to one destination only – Allah. We also note an interesting difference between these two sentences in that *tawakkul* (reliance) is in the past tense *tawakkalt*, while *inabah* (returning) is in the present. This perfect precision is due to the fact that the speaker is Allah Himself.

Naturally, it is expected to find such perfect accuracy in the language of the Quran. Placing trust in Allah is a basic doctrine, adhered to from the beginning. Even before we begin to discuss the notion of putting one's trust in Allah, we know that it initially exists and is foundational. Only after first relying on Allah can we then turn to Him in subsequent future events. For this reason, this verse mentions trust in Allah first, then turning to Him.

The next verse discusses another aspect of the power of Allah *the Most High*, and clarifies His Role as the True Protector and Supporter for all creation:

فَاطْرُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ أَزْوَاجًا
يَذَرُوكُمْ فِيهِ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿١١﴾

The Creator of the heavens and earth.' He made mates for you from among yourselves — and for the animals too — so that you may multiply. There is nothing like Him: He is the All Hearing, the All Seeing [11] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 11)

Here, the emphasis is on Allah as the Originator of creation. This can also be found in the first verse of the chapter of *Fatir*: 'All the praises and thanks

be to Allah, the (Only) Originator [or the (Only) Creator] of the heavens and the earth...' (*Fatir*: 1). The word *Fatir* (originator) means the One Who originates and materialises creation without a prior model. This has a parallel in the industrial world where the products of some industrially developed countries have been copied by industrially developing countries. Even though the second group of countries may enhance and add features to the industrial products, still they are not the first designers of the original models. Thus, the meaning of the phrase '...Originator of the heavens and the earth...' (*Fatir*: 1) is that Allah is the One Who Created the heavens and earth originally without a preceding pattern or design.

Continuing on, the phrase '...He has given you...' (*ash-Shura*: 11) means that all things have been created for the benefit of the children of Adam, whom Allah has selected as His vicegerents on the earth. Therefore, the Qudsi Hadith says: 'O son of Adam, I created all things for your sake, and I created you for My sake. So do not preoccupy yourself with that which already belongs to you and be distracted from that which you belong to (namely, worshipping Allah).'⁽¹⁾

Continuing with the verse, we read: '...He has made for you from yourselves, mates...' (*ash-Shura*: 11). By 'mates,' Allah *the Most High* is referring specifically to the bifurcation of the human species into males and females. This idea appears elsewhere in the Quran, such as the following verse from the chapter of *Ya Sin*: 'Glory be to Him, Who has created all the pairs of that which the earth produces, as well as of their own (human) kind (male and female), and of that which they know not' (*Ya Sin*: 36).

(1) *Ibn Kathir stated in his exegesis (vol. 4, p. 238): 'It was narrated in some religious books that Allah the Exalted said: "O son of Adam, I created you to worship Me, so do not play. I have already set your share of sustenance, so do not weary yourself. Seek Me, you will find Me. If you find Me, you will find everything else; and if you miss Me, you will miss everything else. Indeed, I am more beloved to you than anything else." ' Narrated by Imam Ahmad in his Musnad (vol. 2, p. 358) as Hadith marfu` (a Hadith narrated from the Prophet with a connected or disconnected chain of narration) on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him who narrated from the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him that he said: 'Allah says: O son of Adam, free yourself for My worship, I will (in turn) fill your chest with satisfaction and remove your poverty. If you do not, I will fill your hands with distraction and will not remove your poverty.'*

The notion of duality has been discovered by modern science to be present in all things, even in inanimate objects. Such as the positive and negative poles of electricity and the tiny particles that make up matter. In former eras, people observed this phenomenon in living beings: humans, animals, and plants. Now, science has advanced to the point where we see such a division in all things created by Allah. This proves the truth of Allah's Words: '...and of that which they know not' (*Ya Sin*: 36).

One of the remarkable aspects in connection with duality in creation is the presence of certain plants which have male traits, and others which have female ones. For these plants, pollination occurs through intermediary means such as the wind or insects. Even more astonishing than this is the existence of hermaphroditic plants, possessing both male and female characteristics. Sycamore trees fall into this category, as do palms. Mangoes, on the other hand, are self-pollinating, requiring no cross-pollination. Wheat and corn are also like them. They self-pollinate, due to the presence of both male and female traits in the same plant.

In this context, the phrase, '...He has made for you from yourselves, mates...' (*ash-Shura*: 11), therefore, refers to opposites which exist within the same species or type. Nature causes these opposites of the same species, that is, the males and females, to be attracted to one another, leading to cohabitation and the instinct to have sexual relations. For humans, this instinct carries with it both the pleasurable aspect and the procreative function.

Animals only engage in sex for the latter reason, evinced by the fact that a male is only attracted sexually to a female of a particular species until the female becomes impregnated; after this, the male does not come to her for copulation again.⁽¹⁾ Despite this difference between animals and humans, however, both share the procreative instinct. Why, then, do some call this instinct a 'bestial desire' doing insult to animal creatures by insinuating the baseness of their sexual impulses, when it is in fact shared by humans and animals alike?

(1) From Proofreader: This information is according to the knowledge and belief of *Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawi Allah rest his soul* and it was stated by him to further clarify certain points, but it does not necessarily conform to the scientific facts and information proven true.

One of Allah's Boons to creation was the formation of mates within the same species, allowing concord and harmony to exist between its members, as well as the procreation and preservation of that species. For this reason, the True Lord *the Exalted* most graciously conferred a favour by sending to the community of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* a Messenger from among themselves, carrying to them Allah's Message: 'Verily, there has come unto you a Messenger (Muhammad) from among yourselves. It grieves him that you should receive any injury or difficulty. He is anxious over you, for the believers (he is) full of pity, kind and merciful' (*at-Tawba*: 128). From this statement, we understand the care that Islam gives to family life, and that love, harmony, and intimacy must prevail in that sort of life. Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* says: '...and He placed between you affection and mercy...' (*ar-Rum*: 21).

The term *azwaj* (mates) has the singular form *zawj* in Arabic, (which often refers to a couple, as in a marriage relationship). However, *zawj* in this context takes on the sense of an individual being or thing which is accompanied by its like, rather than connoting two such things at once. Likewise, the word *taw'am* (twin) refers not to two twins at once, but to one individual.

Continuing with the present verse, we read, '...and among the cattle, mates...' (*ash-Shura*: 11). This idea has appeared in previous chapters such as the chapter of *al-An'am*: 'Eight pairs; of the sheep two (male and female), and of the goats two (male and female). Say, "Has He forbidden the two males or the two females, or (the young) which the wombs of the two females enclose? Inform me with knowledge if you are truthful. And of the camels two (male and female), and of oxen two (male and female)"...' (*al-An'am*: 143-144). Here, eight types of mates are mentioned, coming from four different species of cattle which are each divided into male and female counterparts.

Moving on, the phrase '...He multiplies you thereby...' (*ash-Shura*: 11) means to increase or augment the people in number by means of the Lord's creation of mates. We note that Allah *the Most High* has not said *bihi* (with or by) the creation of mates, but rather 'thereby' (*fihi*) meaning 'through' or 'by means of'. The preposition *fi* used with this specific meaning also

appears in the Noble Hadith: 'A woman was sent to hell by reason of (fi) her imprisoning a cat.'⁽¹⁾

Allah's saying: '...there is nothing like unto Him...' (*ash-Shura*: 11) is particularly appropriate here. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks of how all things are divided into mates, male and female, He wants to distinguish Himself from everything else in terms of bifurcation into male and female counterparts. He *Glorified is He* therefore states: '...there is nothing like unto Him ...' (*ash-Shura*: 11). It would be one thing to simply say: 'He has no equal' which would suffice to negate any similarity between Allah and everything else. However, here the Arabic puts extra emphasis on this point by using the word *kamithlihi* (like unto) the frequent usage of which in human discourse shows how much people like to speak using comparisons. We see this in everyday Arabic speech, in which the phrase 'like' or 'as' actually refers back, by implication, to the subject of comparison. For example, a person may say: 'One such as yourself would not do that' as an injunction against a particular behaviour. The meaning is: 'You should not do that, because a good person (such as yourself) would not do such a thing.' One may therefore say, for example, 'One such as yourself would not exhibit cowardice on the battlefield.' Granted, it would be much easier to simply say: 'You should not be a coward in times of war,' rather than inserting the phrase 'one such as yourself'.

However, the language here is operating on a different level, namely the level of allegorical speech. If, for example, one were to use the simile, 'Zayd is like a lion' this does not mean that Zayd is in fact a lion. It is a figurative device used to underscore some of Zayd's personality traits which resemble those of a lion, but to a lesser degree; the lion is obviously more lion-like than Zayd, whose characteristics only bear a resemblance to the lion. Doubtless, the

(1) Narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Umar Allah be pleased with him that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said: 'A woman was punished in hell because of a cat which she had confined until it died. She did not give it to eat or to drink when it was confined, nor did she free it so that it might eat the vermin of the earth.' It was related in *Al-Bukhari* in his *Sahih* (3318). Ibn Hajar stated in his book titled *Al-Fath* (vol. 6, p. 357): 'The intended meaning of the phrase "the vermin of the earth" is the pests and rodents, such as mice and the like.'

subject of comparison is worthier than the object with which the subject is compared. Therefore, we would not say that there exists something like the True Lord *Glorified is He* even when just assuming, since nothing would be truly like unto Him. Something 'like' Allah would not be Allah Himself, but rather, a creature or thing of a lower existence which, when compared to Allah, might resemble Him in some way. This is what the poet⁽¹⁾ means when he writes:

I did not mean by saying, 'One such as You,' except

Someone other than You, O Singular One without Like!⁽²⁾

Thus, in the phrase '...there is nothing like unto Him...' (*ash-Shura*: 11) the style of negating the existence of anything which compares to Allah goes beyond merely denying that there exists something which resembles Allah. Indeed, Allah affirms the fact that, even if such a thing existed, it still would not be 'like' Him, since comparison does not mean equation. The 'nothing' to which the verse refers encompasses any kind or sort of the various aspects of Allah's creation. So anything in creation that can be referred to as a 'thing' is entirely unlike Allah.

Continuing on, we read, '...and He is the Hearing, the Seeing' (*ash-Shura*: 11). This description of Allah involves two attributes which some of His creatures are endowed with. Allah sees and hears, and humans can see and hear. However, we must regard this description of Allah in the light of the phrase just discussed, which is that '...there is nothing like unto Him...' (*ash-Shura*: 11). Allah does not hear as humans do, nor does He see as they do. The description of Allah as 'the Hearing' means that He hears all sounds; and 'the Seeing' that He sees all visual things.

(1) *Abu At-Tayyib Al-Mutanabbi Ahmad ibn Al-Husayn*, born in *Kufa* (303 A.H. /915 A.D.). He was a wise, learned man and a poet. He was raised in the region of Sham (the Levant). From there, he went on to live in the desert with the Bedouin, where he began his career as a poet while still a youth. While living with the tribes of *Samawa*, he advanced the claim that he was a new prophet. He was captured and imprisoned for this after which he repented and forsook his pretensions to prophethood. He was most famous for his praise poetry to *Sayf Ad-Dawla ibn Hamdan*, the governor of Aleppo. *Al-Mutanabbi* was killed in Baghdad in 354 A.H. /965 A.D. at the age of 51.

(2) This is the final line of a poem by *Al-Mutanabbi* composed in the *sari*' (fast) meter and comprising 35 lines in total.

Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* states: ‘...and Allah is Seeing of what they do’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 71). In this, we see that hearing is counted as an action, as well as speech and sight. As explained in previous sections, a person’s actions consist of words and deeds. Words are confined to that which is uttered by the tongue, and deeds comprise all acts carried out by the sense organs except for the tongue. Accordingly, the tongue takes over one-half of a person’s actions because with it a person makes statements, proclaims his faith and expresses himself.

So this verse teaches us how to place Allah *the Most High* above any peers, counterparts or equals. We have also learned to view the attributes shared between Allah and His creation within the frame of this belief [‘there is nothing like unto Him’].

And why not, when such characteristics and abilities differ even from one human being to another? Different houses offer a simple, yet clear example. The sentinel of a town may have a house with an outdoor stone bench for receiving guests. The chief of the town and the mayor may also have their own houses with such a bench or a sitting room, each according to his means. But the town commissioner may have a larger house than all three of these men, filled with luxuries that the others could not hope to possess. All of these people own houses, but they differ in the type and quality of those homes. This brief example serves to illustrate the differences in characteristics or qualities from one person to another. If such differences exist between humans, how much more so in the qualities shared between humans and our Lord *the Glorious and Exalted*?

لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن
يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾

The keys of the heavens and the earth are His; He provides abundantly or sparingly for whoever He will; He has full knowledge of all things [12] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 12)

When considering this verse, let us first note the usage of the style of *qasr* (restriction) in the part saying: ‘To Him belong the keys of the heavens and

the earth...' (*ash-Shura*: 12) in which the propositional phrase 'To Him' is placed before the verb, 'belong'. In Arabic, this style emphasises the fact that the keys of heaven and earth belong to no one other than Allah alone. They are exclusively His own, and no one has any share of that with Him.

The word 'keys' here refers to Allah's possession of the keys of all beneficial and good things for mankind, whether in the heavens or on the earth. Allah also says in another place in the Quran: 'And with Him are the keys of the Unseen, none knows them but He...' (*al-An'am*: 59). The Unseen is just one of several storehouses, locked up away from the reach of anyone. When Allah grants someone a key to one of these depositories, giving him access to some knowledge of the Unseen, He empowers him to speak knowledgeably as a special bounty and honour bestowed upon him. It is by the grace of the Most High Allah alone that such a thing comes to pass. However, this access into understanding that has been granted to him does not make him an expert on the Unseen, as if he were fit to open an office of the Unseen sciences! Rather, such a person should make good use of the knowledge that Allah has conferred upon him, and return the key to its proper Owner. 'And with Him are the keys of the Unseen; none knows them except Him...' (*al-An'am*: 59). Indeed, those who claim to have knowledge of the Unseen lack courtesy with Allah.

In our common language, we also employ the word *maqalid* (keys) in various everyday contexts, (often with a figurative meaning). For example, we may say that a person possesses the keys of rule, or control or dominion to describe being in a management position or other occupation in which power has been granted to him over decisions or policies. We say of such a person, 'he holds the keys of power...' meaning he is responsible for management choices or decisions or controls the business and knows its secrets.

Continuing with the verse, we read: 'He enlarges provision for whom He wills, and straitens (it for whom He wills)...' (*ash-Shura*: 12). This goes along with the preceding discussion of the keys possessed by Allah, one of which is Providence, or the power to grant sustenance freely and easily to some people, or to give it meagrely or even withhold it from others, according to His Will. Allah expounds this idea elsewhere in the Quran: 'And there is not a thing but that with Us are its depositories, and We do not send it down except

according to a known measure' (*al-Hijr*: 21). In other words, Allah bestows or withholds His Sustenance and Gifts according to his Knowledge and Wisdom and in Divine measure. Do not think that the distribution of wealth among people is random and haphazard. Indeed, the Distributor has full knowledge of His creatures and is perfectly aware of their secrets and their hidden needs and wants. He is the All-Wise Who puts everything in its proper place. Therefore, we should not be surprised to see a millionaire living in opulence and luxury, while his neighbour can barely find nourishment for the day. We should not be astonished to see some shop owners enjoying a healthy flow of commerce, with customers buying and selling all day long, while stores adjacent to theirs receive no customers at all. We should not be shocked by such discrepancies in wealth and sustenance because there is a higher wisdom behind such differences. Wisdom which some understand and others do not.

In this regard, it is sufficient to read Allah's saying: 'And there is not a thing but that with Us are its depositories, and We do not send it down except according to a known measure' (*al-Hijr*: 21). As a concluding explanation of this fact, the verse under consideration reads: '...verily! He is the Knower of everything' (*ash-Shura*: 12). He knows who to give to and who not to give. For this reason, our master, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said in explanation of the wisdom behind uneven distribution of sustenance that Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* says in a Qudsi Hadith: 'Among my servants are those whom if I make rich, they will become corrupted; and those whom if I make poor, they will be set right.'⁽¹⁾ Elsewhere, the True Lord *the Most High* says: 'No! [But] indeed, man transgresses. Because he sees himself self-sufficient' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7).

And so we understand that there is wisdom behind the poverty of the poor and the richness of the rich. You should not raise objections to this. Instead, contemplate the situation. Perhaps wealth in your hands becomes a tool for

(1) Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi in his book *Al-Asma' wa As-Sifat* (p. 121 - Egypt), and Al-Baghawi in his explanation of the *Sunnah* (vol. 1, p. 142), and Abu Bakr Al-Kalabadhi in *Miftah Al-Ma'any* (190), and Al-Albani in *As-Silsilah Ad-Da'ifah wa Al-Mawdu'ah* (vol. 4, p. 256). He commented saying. 'It is ranked as very weak.' It begins as follows: 'He who antagonises a wali (a good worshipper, a faithful obedient servant) of Mine, I declare war against him.'

assault, oppression, or violence. Or perhaps riches induce you to disobey Allah or kindle in you an inclination to evil. Excess luxury leads to any number of evil acts, which is why, when Allah withholds riches from some people, He is actually protecting them through poverty. Where wealth is appropriate to some, it may not be to others. You may act more righteously when you have little and show contentment with what Allah has allotted to you. You live contently and avert your eyes from gazing at the worldly belongings and riches of those who are of a higher status (financially) than you.

We often see how corrupt the children of rich people can become due to the vast wealth at their disposal. Meanwhile, the son of a poor man is often protected from such vice, a fact which quite possibly makes his life better than that of the rich man's son. Examples of this abound in our lives.

A believer is only required to live within his financial means. However, there are those who try to set up a certain lifestyle for themselves before they have the means to pay for it. Struggling under financial difficulties, such people who do not have a sufficient income to sustain a lavish lifestyle often resort to illegal practices such as deceit, theft, bribery, and other unlawful means of obtaining the money necessary to cover their expenses. In this regard, Allah states: 'Let a man of wealth spend from his wealth, and he whose provision is restricted – let him spend from what Allah has given him. Allah does not charge a soul except [according to] what He has given it. Allah will bring about, after hardship, ease' (*at-Talaq*: 7).

When a believer enters a marketplace, for example, he finds all kinds of delicious, appetising foods – turkey, beef, fish, and fruits. And he may even desire them greatly. But in the end, he contents himself with the food he can afford, according to his means. He buys a kilogram of green beans and half a kilogram of cheese, and takes them home and eats them with his wife and children, finding in them a deliciousness which a rich man may not experience. However, if he were to fix his gaze on kinds of food which are beyond his means to buy, he would go into debt to be able to eat as wealthy people do. This might even lead to excess buying and eating to the point where the man becomes a spendthrift, squandering his means. This can go on for some time until his creditor knocks on his door one day, seeking repayment of the debt

he owes him. On that day, the sweetness of rich foods will be nothing compared to the shame suffered due to debt.

For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses the son of Adam in a Qudsi Hadith: 'O son of Adam, I have created you so that you would devote yourself to Me, therefore, do not deviate from this path of worship. And I gave you sustenance so that you might not suffer fatigue—not the fatigue that comes from bodily wounds, but from thought, concerns and mental preoccupation with your life's sustenance. If you content yourself with that which I have provided you, I will bring peace to your heart and body, and you will be regarded as praiseworthy. But if you are not content with what I have given, by My Majesty and greatness I will give this world power over you, such that you race about it like a beast running amok in the wild; that you gather from it only that which I have allotted you and that you receive my rebuke. O son of Adam, I have created the heavens and the earth, and that was an effortless matter to Me. Do you not think, then, that giving you a loaf of bread is an easier task to me? O son of Adam, ask not for tomorrow's sustenance just as I do not ask you for tomorrow's obedience to My commands. O son of Adam, you are ever beloved of Me and it remains My right to ask you to be ever beloved to Me.'⁽¹⁾

Therefore, if a poor person is content with that which the Lord has given him, and does not seek a lavish lifestyle beyond his means to pay for it, Allah will say to him: 'You have been content with the small measure of sustenance which I have given you and now, I will bless you with an increased measure'. It is for this reason that we see numerous examples of successful, wealthy people who started from scratch and suffered meagre⁽²⁾ conditions, and rose from the bottom of the social pyramid.

(1) This was mentioned in Ibn Kathir's *Tafsir* (426/7, from the Dar Ash-Sha'b Al-Muhaqqiqqa edition), and noted that summarised versions of it are found in several of the sacred books. Ismail Haqqi mentioned it in his Quranic commentary, *Ruh Al-Bayan Fi Tafsir Al-Quran* (59/7), in his exposition of verse 71 from the chapter of *an-Nahl*: 'And Allah has favoured some of you over others in provision' (*an-Nahl*: 71).

(2) The Arabic word used here, *mudaqqa'*, derives from the word *ad-daqa'a* meaning the dust of the earth. Thus, the word "meagre," (*mudaqqa'*) refers to one who clings to the level of the very dust, as it were, due to his extreme poverty.

When pondering the question of the limited economic conditions some of Allah's creations live in, we see that He withholds sustenance from some for a wise purpose, not only in terms of individual spiritual gain, but also for society as a whole. The apparent discrepancy between people's means leads to a form of harmony among the elements of a community, whereby everyone must rely on everyone else. The poor relies on the wealthy for sustenance- this we know-likewise, the wealthy relies on the poor for certain basic labours essential to any society. Not everyone can be a CEO as the world needs people to work in such professions like industrial production, agriculture and other fundamental occupations. Neither type of employment is better or worse than another type; each provides wages for the employee. A businessman needs to make money to live, so he engages in commerce. A maid, on the other hand, needs to earn her living, so she polishes, sweeps and cleans in people's houses. Consequently, it is out of material necessity and benefit that social classes are connected.

Another aspect of this discussion has to do with the quality of labour performed solely for the sake of money. For example, it is worth noting that many wealthy businessmen and CEO complain about their employees, grumbling that they only do their jobs when they run out of cash. As long as they have money in their pockets, the workers do not perform at their full potential. Along these same lines, I remember something my old professor, Musa Sharif, was fond of saying. He would lament, 'Oh that I could make learned men rich and mere labourers poor!' When asked about this statement, he would explain that people of learning take pride in knowledge for its own sake and would undertake to learn and to teach even if they were not paid well for it. Whereas, mere labourers work only for financial gain and do not have the same love for their vocation like the scholar.

As noted previously, the amount of work a person performs now will determine the payoff later. If a person works for ten years and saves his money, he will be able to live comfortably for the rest of his life. However, if that same person were to labour for twenty years, putting away his income, he would be able to provide a comfortable lifestyle for himself and his children after him. And if he undertook thirty years of employment in order to set aside his money, his grandchildren would still be enjoying the fruits of his labours long after his passing away. As a final note, we should remember that,

despite one's best efforts, temporal conditions are subject to change. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And these days [of varying conditions] We alternate among the people...' (*Al-Imran*: 140). So, today a person might enjoy sustenance and material blessings, tomorrow those things might be taken from him.

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا
نَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ اللَّهُ يَجْتَبِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُنِيبُ ﴿١٣﴾

In matters of faith, He has laid down for you [people] the same commandment that He gave Noah, which We have revealed to you [Muhammad] and which We enjoined on Abraham and Moses and Jesus: 'Uphold the faith and do not divide into factions within it' – what you [Prophet] call upon the idolaters to do is hard for them; God chooses whoever He pleases for Himself and guides towards Himself those who turn to Him [13] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 13)

This verse provides further explanation and insight into the third verse at the beginning of this chapter: 'Thus has He revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and to those before you - Allah, the Exalted in Might, the Wise' (*ash-Shura*: 3). We note here the employment of a summary early on, followed later by the elucidation of details; this rhetorical device is one distinguishing feature of the Quranic style. To begin, we read Allah's statement, 'He has ordained for you of religion...' (*ash-Shura*: 13) meaning He has established and clarified the matter. The Arabic word *shara`* (ordained) is the source of such words as *sharra`* to make laws and *sharia*, i.e. the clear path which is used to refer to the legal code of Islam. This part of the verse refers to divine providence with regard to spiritual matters. We know that humans are comprised of two aspects, a material and a spiritual, and just as Allah provides food and air for the sustenance of the physical body, so too, does He breathe life into the human's soul, a life filled with morals and values.

Those standards make up the right way of Allah, which He revealed to the heart of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Indeed, it is by this way that He gives life to the hearts and spirits of people, just as He gives

life to their bodies by providing food and water. This ordination of true faith is not something new, nor is the path established for humankind, but rather a law established by Allah for all those who have come before, according to that which was of most benefit to them.

It is for this reason that the next statement we read in the verse is ‘...what He enjoined upon Nuh (Noah)...’ (*ash-Shura*: 13) meaning those things which Allah *Glorified is He* had commanded Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* to do, and the religious duties made incumbent upon him. Allah chose Nuh (Noah) for this because he was the first messenger to reveal Allah’s words to people at large. Scholars point out that Nuh (Noah) was sent out primarily to call the people of his time to take refuge in the ark. This constitutes his particular mission as a messenger sent to give the commands of Allah to all people. Numerous prophets since Nuh (Noah) have had similar callings, in order to bring Allah’s words to the masses. The final of these is, of course, the message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* a message intended for all nations and peoples found upon the earth.

Let us take a moment to reflect on the rhetorical style of this particular statement. The relative pronoun *ma* (that which), but with a more specific semantic intent. It would have been logical to use the word ‘that which’ in the next statement ‘...and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad]...’ (*ash-Shura*: 13) except that this refers to revelation given to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. Therefore, the more general relative pronoun, which, is the principle relative pronoun by grammarians of Arabic, is used in this particular context, leaving the pronoun, that which, to be used in the other statements regarding revelation found in the verse. We also note the verb ‘He has ordained’, which appears in the first person singular form of the present perfect tense. This is different from the statement referring to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessing be upon him* in which we read, ‘...and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad]...’ (*ash-Shura*: 13). Here, the verb appears in the second person plural form, which is often called the plural of majesty. Then, next clause returns to using the relative pronoun, that which, in another form, ‘and what We enjoined upon Ibrahim (Abraham) and Musa (Moses) and ‘Isa (Jesus)’ (*ash-Shura*: 13). The fact that this verse

employs a different relative pronoun- the principal one- when referring the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* is evidence of his special status, being set apart from all the other messengers *peace be upon them*.

We read, then, that Allah *Glorified is He* has ordained something and set it apart. The clause which follows elaborates what this thing is, beginning with the word ‘that’, which introduces the subjunctive mood expressing a wish, and signals an explanation of what Allah Has ordained exactly and set apart, namely, ‘...to establish the religion and not be divided therein’ (*ash-Shura*: 13). This is similar to another verse where Allah says, ‘And We inspired to the mother of Musa (Moses), “Suckle him...”’ (*al-Qasas*: 17). In short, Allah ordained to these prophets that they establish true religion and that they do not allow discord or enmity to exist among them. Delving further into this point, to establish something means to cause it to stand, i.e. to be firm. When something stands, it is ultimately evidence of the power or ability to do something since no one exerts more energy than he has to spare. If a person gets tired of standing, he sits down and once he is tired of that, he lies down. And so, when Allah *Glorified is He* tells us to establish the true religion, He wishes for us to stand for religion, rather than to sit idly by or to lie down in the wake of trials. The idea of standing here is a metaphor for attention to the establishment of religion and its preservation thereof. Finally, the phrase ‘...and not be divided therein’ (*ash-Shura*: 13) means that you put an end to the differences and squabbles between you.

The Arabic word for ‘divided’, appears elsewhere in the Quran in the story of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*: ‘And there entered the prison with him two young men. One of them said, “Indeed, I have seen myself [in a dream] pressing wine.” The other said, “Indeed, I have seen myself carrying upon my head [some] bread, from which the birds were eating. Inform us of its interpretation; indeed, we see you to be of those who do the good.”’ (*Yusuf*: 36)

The final statement ‘...indeed, we see you to be of those who do the good.’ (*Yusuf*: 36) refers to goodness, not just that which comes from those who do good, but also from those who commit acts of disobedience. However, the meaning here is that the degree or ability to do good deeds is not a gift from Allah, but rather, it depends on our adherence to Allah’s orders.

In the next verse, Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* expounds this example, which has allowed him to exercise dream interpretation: ‘...Indeed, I have left the religion of a people who do not believe in Allah, and they, in the Hereafter, are disbelievers. And I have followed the religion of my fathers, Ibrahim (Abraham), Ishaq (Isaac) and Ya`qub (Jacob). And it was not for us to associate anything with Allah. That is from the favour of Allah upon us and upon the people, but most of the people are not grateful.’ (*Yusuf*: 37-38)

From this explanation, we understand that Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* wished to portray the ease of obtaining divine gifts and the ability to use them. He, therefore, first expounds the way by which this is accomplished, instead of going right into his interpretation of the dreams of his prison cellmates. He saw that they had a more immediate need for spiritual direction, guidance, and counsel, rather than an explanation of the visions they were shown. For this reason, he took advantage of the fact that his companions were attentive to his words since they wanted him to interpret their dreams. For this reason, he engaged in this discussion with them about faith: ‘You worship not besides Him except [mere] names you have named them, you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority. Legislation is not but for Allah. He has commanded that you worship not except Him. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know.’ (*Yusuf*: 40) In this verse, Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* discusses true worship and the inadequacy of revering multiple gods. Only after having this conversation, in which he invites his prison companions to adhere to the true path of Allah, does he begin his interpretation of their dreams: ‘O two companions of prison, as for one of you, he will give drink to his master of wine; but as for the other, he will be crucified, and the birds will eat from his head. The matter has been decreed about which you both inquire.’ (*Yusuf*: 41)

If Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* had given his interpretation of the two dreams first, then followed it with his counsel about following Allah’s commands, his cellmates would not have listened to him with the same concentration. It is a fact of human nature that people do things primarily to satisfy their interests; Yusuf (Joseph) would have fulfilled his companions’ needs right away if he had immediately told them the interpretation of their

dreams, causing them to divert their attention away from his advice about faith which would follow. He, therefore, began with what he desired to pass on to them, leaving their needs aside until he has finished he intended to say. From this story, then, we learn that, if a person wishes to have full attention of another person who has approached him in need, the first person should postpone fulfilling the second person's need until he has said what he wishes to say.

Continuing with the verse, we read: '...to establish the religion and not be divided therein' (*ash-Shura*: 13). This means that the believers are not to take any but Allah as their Lord and only God. It is also a divine order against division into factions and parties, as Allah says elsewhere in the Quran: 'Indeed, those who have divided their religion and become sects - you, [O Muhammad], are not [associated] with them in anything.' (*al-An'am*: 159) In that moment in which people are separated into opposing groups, they have gone astray, since it is incumbent upon us to gather together around Allah, united in faith.

In the next part of the verse: 'Difficult for those who associate others with Allah is that to which you invite them.' (*ash-Shura*: 13) The Arabic word *kabura* (difficult for those) means to be a burden or a trouble to someone; this differs from the word *kabara*, from the same tri-literal root, which means to increase in age. This statement uses the former because monotheism and sincerity of belief in the one true Lord are burdensome and painful to the disbelievers. It is troublesome for them to bear testimony that 'there is no god but Allah', knowing as they do what it really means. They realise it signifies a way to lead one's life, complete with obligations and requirements, rather than mere words which are spoken. Accordingly, their reluctance to say them, 'It is also a burden upon the disbelievers to think that all people should be equal, like the teeth of a comb, one neither greater nor lesser than another, except in matters of devotion to Allah and performing good deeds'. This is because they came historically from the elite and they had a difficult time dealing with a religion like Islam, which brought with it the idea that master and slave are equal as human beings. This idea is troublesome to them and a burden. For this reason, they disputed with the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and took a stand against him. But Allah *Glorified is He* never left him to face them by himself and assured him by saying: 'Allah

chooses for Himself whom He wills and guides to Himself whoever turns back [to Him]' (*ash-Shura*: 13). It is as if He is trying to say, 'Do not fret over their antagonistic attitude towards you or their rejection of your invitation to follow the true religion. It is only natural for them to approach you in this way because your message threatens to remove the power which they have enjoyed for so long. It will prevent them from spreading corruption in society and benefiting from it, as they have done in the past; and from subjecting the people to their whims, leaving them without power to escape. Their animosity towards you is evidence that you are in the right when you call them to repentance. Thus, their hostility is to be expected, since they follow their nature and you follow yours; they behave in a spirit of aggression and stubbornness and arrogance and you in a spirit of longsuffering'.

Therefore, Allah's statement 'Allah chooses for Himself whom He wills and guides to Himself whoever turns back [to Him]' (*ash-Shura*: 13) refers to those powerful leaders who stubbornly resist the call to true religion. It means that there will be those among them who decide to answer that call, who will uphold it and be like an ensign for it. Allah *Glorified is He* consequently comforts His Messenger, telling him not to be sad or to worry, since he will lead many disbelievers to the faith one by one. This is upheld by the acceptance of Islam by several of the Companions, such as 'Umar and Khalid and 'Amr and 'Ikrima *Allah be pleased with them* and others. It should be noted that the Arabic word *yajtabi* (chooses) means that Allah selects and sets apart those of His slaves whom He wishes, in order for them to be protectors of His true religion. That setting apart is as if it were the first step, a preface to being able to receive His guidance. That is why He begins with the statement that He chooses whom He wills, following it with the affirmation that He: 'guides to Himself whoever turns back [to Him]' (*ash-Shura*: 13). He first calls and sets apart those whom He wills, softening their resistance to the call to true religion and making faith beloved to them, in order to prepare them to be guided by Him.

In historical accounts of wars and invasions, we read examples of how Allah *Glorified is He* preserved those disbelievers, whom He later converted to Islam. There are numerous stories of about the companions of the Prophet

peace and blessings be upon him who would return home from war, feeling dejected after unsuccessful attempts to kill such then known to be disbelievers like Khalid, `Amr and `Ikrima *Allah be pleased with them* who were counted among the enemies and later converted to Islam. At the time, the Companions were unaware that Allah had set these men apart and preserved them, in order to prosper His true religion and exalt His word through them. Indeed, Allah safeguarded these men, calling them from among the disbelievers and choosing them to be later guided by accepting Islam so that they would carry its banner and spread its message to all peoples and nations.

Before leaving behind the thirteenth verse, let us consider two points of controversy among some orientalisks concerning what Allah 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)...' (*ash-Shura*: 13). The first point involves the question of revelation. If Islam were the same yesterday, today and forever, then why would Allah reveal different laws to different messengers in different times and places? This goes along with the second point of contention, which involves a seeming contradiction between this and other verses. We read elsewhere in the Quran: 'To each of you We prescribed a law and a method' (*al-Ma'ida*: 48). In other words, every prophet has his respective law and Muhammad had things revealed to him which were not revealed to those who came before him.

In answer to the first point, we know that Allah Has revealed certain truths and doctrines which are incumbent upon all people and for this reason He has made them known to all His messengers. The inspired revelations received by Allah's messengers all agree concerning these fundamental principles, the foremost of which is the oneness of Allah and the absence of any god other than Him. After this first principle, come other basic doctrines such as faith in the holy books and in the messengers of Allah. These first truths are unchanging, divine revelations seen in the words of every prophet; they represent the cornerstone of true religion and they are what is intended when 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)...' (*ash-Shura*: 13). The word, 'revealed', here refers to those necessary, unchanging principles common to all religions inspired by Allah's word. The truth behind Allah's Oneness is expressed by every righteous messenger; likewise, acts of worship such as prayer and almsgiving appear as obligatory practices in every religious law preceding Islam, making it impossible for any inspired message to neglect their importance.

For example, we see the importance of prayer illustrated in the story of our prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* who took his family to live in a parched valley which was a hardship for them due to the lack of food. He explains the reasoning behind this decision, which was made in the following verse: '...that they may establish prayer...' (*Ibrahim*: 37). In this same story, Allah *Glorified is He* states: 'And [mention, O Muhammad], when We designated⁽¹⁾ for Ibrahim (Abraham) the site of the House, [saying], "Do not associate anything with Me and purify My House for those who perform *Tawaf* and those who stand [in prayer] and those who bow and prostrate."' (*al-Hajj*: 26) We see this also in another story, that of prophet Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him*: 'They said, "O Shu'aib (Jethro), does your prayer command you that we should leave what our fathers worship..."' (*Hud*: 87)? And yet again, in the story of prophet Zakariyya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him*: 'So the angels called him while he was standing in prayer in the chamber...' (*Al-Imran*: 39).

Likewise, the practice of *zakat* is present in the inspired message of every prophet in every religion. For example, in the following verse, Allah *Glorified is He* explains this concept: 'He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself. And mentions the name of his Lord and prays. But you prefer the worldly life, while the Hereafter is better and more enduring. Indeed, this is in the former scriptures, The scriptures of Ibrahim (Abraham) and Musa (Moses).' (*al-A'la*: 14-19) In this manner, all divinely inspired religions

(1) Designated means facilitated for him a place. Similarly, Allah mentions in another verse: 'And [remember] when you, [O Muhammad], left your family in the morning to post the believers at their stations for the battle [of Uhud] ...' (*Al-Imran*: 121) which means that Allah placed them in the battle field- without leaving it- to fight. (Adapted from Al-Qamus Al-Qawim 1/88)

encourage believers to rid their bodies and souls of those sins and transgressions which harm both self and society; omission of sin is prerequisite to true submission to Allah. Every inspired religion enjoins personal purity upon its followers—from one's heart all the way to the soles of one's feet, a true believer cleanses himself from sin and error. Take the heart, for example as a symbol of one's thoughts and feelings; it is the foremost of human organs, exerting the most influence on one's overall disposition. That is why the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'However, there is in the body a morsel of flesh which, if made pure, will purify the entire body; and if corrupted, will corrupt the whole self. This morsel of flesh is the heart.'⁽¹⁾ There are a number of things which believers are asked to remove from their hearts, such as the thought that there are any gods other than Allah *Glorified is He* insistence on transgressing or rebelling against His law. They are also required not to have feelings of security from Allah's Wrath or lose hope in His Mercy.

Likewise, followers of Islam are required to rid their tongues of impure speech since the tongue is the vanguard of expression and clarity. There are a number of things which believers should purge from their daily communication, including the telling of lies, slandering women of good repute, perjury and swearing the dipping oath.⁽²⁾ Finally, true believers should rid themselves of spells which magicians pronounce.

As for the belly, we are obligated to cleanse it of alcohol, usury, and stealing from orphans' money. Believers are also to keep their hands clean, avoiding such acts as theft and murder. Likewise, the genitals are to be kept free from prostitution and those other sex acts prohibited by Allah. Even one's legs are to be prohibited from going to any place that displeases Allah, i.e. doing acts of harm.

Among other established principles of any religion, we find the principle of disobedience to parents, which all religions prohibit, but to which human

(1) *Al-Bukhari extracted it for its authenticity (52) and also Muslim, based on An-Na'man ibn Bashir's Hadith (1599).*

(2) It is called a dipping oath because it 'dips' the one swearing by it into the hellfire, as it is a reason why people lose their rights. Ibn-Mas'ud said regarding it, 'It is considered one of the major sins for a man to falsely swear an oath in order to cut from his brother's wages.' *Lisan Al-'Arab*

nature is ever inclined. Allah *Glorified is He* forbids disobedience to one's parents because learning to comply with the demands of a parent is a training ground for obedience to Allah Himself. Parents are the direct means by which we live on earth, just as Allah is the indirect means thereof. Reverence for one's parents, therefore, helps us to follow Allah's Commands and we should respect our mothers and fathers, even if they worship something other than the True Lord, Allah *Glorified is He*. This is clearly stated in the following verse, where Allah says, 'But if they endeavour to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them but accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness...' (*Luqman*: 15).

For this reason, Allah teaches us about the importance of respecting one's parents in every inspired message which He Has revealed. We see this, for example, in the story of prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. Since a lack of obedience to parents was a possible chink in 'Isa's (Jesus's) spiritual armour, through which Satan might have gotten hold of him, Allah commanded 'Isa (Jesus) to revere his mother. However, because 'Isa (Jesus) was born of a mother and not a father, this injunction was for him to respect his mother alone, in order to fend off Satan's temptations: 'And [made me] dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me a wretched tyrant.' (*Maryam*: 32). Whereas in the story of prophet Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* who was born of a mother and a father, the command is to obey both of his parents: 'And dutiful to his parents, and he was not a disobedient tyrant.' (*Maryam*: 14). We note that prophet 'Isa's (Jesus's) statement, 'And [made me] dutiful to my mother...' (*Maryam*: 32), is a recognition of this difference. In the story of Yahya (John), it is Allah who tells us of his reverence for his parents, especially since his very birth was miraculous; his parents were both advanced in age and his mother was barren. The incredulous circumstances surrounding Yahya's (John's) birth represent a potential way for Satan to tempt Yahya (John) to disbelief, by making him question his existence, 'How would I come to being while my mother was barren and my father an old man'?

To conclude, we know that Allah wishes us to cleanse ourselves of all the sins and transgressions mentioned in this discussion. He desires that we rid our bodies of all spiritual filth, turning them into vessels for building society and mutual respect and love among all people. He wants us, through personal

purity, to build our own communities in such a way as to help guarantee a good and happy life for all those with whom we coexist. This command, to cleanse ourselves so that we could help others, is a common denominator of all religions and it represents the intended meaning of Allah's statement 'He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Nuh (Noah)...' (*ash-Shura*: 13).

As for the verse which seems to contradict this one: 'To each of you We prescribed a law and a method' (*al-Ma'ida*: 48), the intended meaning of the phrase 'a law and a method' are those doctrines, laws and principles which are revealed for a particular community, society or environment, or which deal with those plagues and diseases which afflict people. These revealed laws are given to help treat such ailments, depending on the practices of those people, hence why do such laws differ from one religion to the next? Every civilisation has its own trials to undergo. Some have experienced corruption and transgression, while others have tried to scrimp what is in their weights and measures. There are those who worshipped cult images, e.g. objects and statues and others who worshipped planets or angels. We should not be surprised then to find differences in the laws revealed to them.

Accordingly, we see that the two points of contention raised by the orientalisks concerning this verse, have no grounds, since each verse is revealed in a particular context and treats a particular subject.

وَمَا نَفَرَقُوا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعِيًّا بَيْنَهُمْ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ
سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى لَفَقَضَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُورِثُوا
الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ مُرِيبٍ ﴿١٤﴾

They divided, out of rivalry, only after knowledge had come to them, and, if it had not been for a decree already passed by your Lord to reprieve them until an appointed time, they would already have been judged. Those after them, who inherited the Scripture, are in disquieting doubt about it[14]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 14)

Regarding the historical context of this verse, there were disbelievers in Mecca who worshipped cult images. There were also people of the Book,

both Jews and Christians, who contended with those disbelievers. The tension between these two groups prevailed for a long time; the people of the Book were greatly angered by the disbelievers, insomuch that they would say to them, ‘The time will soon come that a prophet will come out from among you. We will fight you tooth and nail, even unto death’.

Allah *Glorified is He* informs us about the state of the people of the Book: ‘And when there came to them a Book from Allah confirming that which was with them - although before they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved - but [then] when there came to them that which they recognised...’ - that is Prophet Muhammad- ‘they disbelieved in it’ (*al-Baqara*: 89).

Indeed, the holy books have testified of Prophet Muhammad’s coming, in the time and place in which he came. The people of the Book knew of him and had ample descriptions of him in their Scriptures. There were even many people of the Book, such as ‘Abdullah ibn As-Salam who understood that Muhammad would bring the complete truth with him and that he was a prophet sent from Allah.

Concerning these people and their knowledge of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Allah *Glorified is He* states: ‘Those to whom We gave the Scripture know him as they know their own sons’ (*al-Baqara*: 146). For this reason, one notable figure⁽¹⁾ from among the people of the Book is said to have been aware of Prophet Muhammad’s coming just like his own son, or even that he was more familiar with Muhammad than his own son.⁽²⁾ This is because statements describing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon*

(1) Referring to ‘Abdullah ibn As-Salam ibn Al-Harith Al-‘Isra‘ili Abu Yusuf. He was a Companion of the Prophet and accepted Islam after the arrival of the Prophet in Medina. At the time, his name was Al-Hasin, and the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* gave him the name ‘Abdullah. He, along with ‘Umar, oversaw the opening of the Holy Mosque, and he resided in Medina until his death in 43 A.H. *Ensigns* by Az-Zirikli, 90-94).

(2) In his *Tafsir* (1/194), Ibn-Kathir states, ‘Al-Qurtubi says, ‘Umar Allah be pleased with him relates that he once asked ‘Abdullah ibn As-Salam, “Did you know of Muhammad’s coming just like you know your own son?” He answered, “Yes, and even better than I know my son. Allah caused His upright servant to come to earth as His authorized representative thereupon. His messenger came according to the description present in the Scriptures and so I knew him when I saw him. As for my son, I did not know him before he came from his mother.”’

him and his advent are repeated throughout their Scriptures. However, many of the people of the Book did not believe in the Prophet when he finally came.

So then, Allah states: 'And they did not become divided until after knowledge had come to them...' (*ash-Shura*: 14). Here, the word 'knowledge' refers to those statements in their Scriptures testifying to the coming of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. 'And if not for a word that preceded from your Lord...' (*ash-Shura*: 14), a decree which Allah had promised them by: '[postponing the penalty] until a specified time...' (*ash-Shura*: 14) referring to the Day of Judgment, 'it would have been concluded between them' (*ash-Shura*: 14), i.e. the ultimate demise and rooting out of the disbelievers and the continued survival of the believers. Allah did not utterly destroy them, but rather postponed their demise since there were those among them who would later accept Islam and become warriors in Allah's army.

In the following verse: 'And indeed, those who were granted inheritance of the Scripture after them are, concerning it, in disquieting doubt' (*ash-Shura*: 14), Allah refers to the Jews and Christians alive during the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by, '...those who were granted inheritance of the Scripture.' (*ash-Shura*: 14) And that they are in 'disquieting doubt' (*ash-Shura*: 14) means that they were in doubt about the inspired writings they had previously received. This alludes to the doubt, hesitation, and confusion they felt regarding their Scriptures since they found a number of errors which led them to distrust those writings. They forgot what Allah had previously revealed about the Christians: 'And from those who say, "We are Christians" We took their covenant; but they forgot a portion of that of which they were reminded' (*al-Ma'ida*: 14). Likewise, the Jews, whom He talks about in the verse before this one: 'So for their breaking of the covenant We cursed them and made their hearts hard. They distort words from their [proper] usages and have forgotten a portion of that of which they were reminded' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13). Here, 'and have forgotten' indicates that forgetfulness is of the forgotten. So, if the Jews truly thought these sayings of the Scriptures were important, they would be constantly pondering on them, rather than neglecting them to the point of forgetting. Even when they did not forget certain statements in the Scriptures, they altered those things which they

remembered. They had no excuse for their failure to remember inspired revelation; how much less of an excuse for perverting Allah's words?

After forgetting what Allah had revealed to them in the Scriptures, which they already had, they suppressed further revelation from their Lord: 'And [mention, O Muhammad], when Allah took a covenant from those who were given the Scripture, [saying], "You must make it clear to the people and not conceal it." But they threw it away behind their backs and exchanged it for a small price. And wretched is that which they purchased.' (*Al-Imran*: 187)

If only they had ceased their distortion of the Scriptures at this point! But they continued to the point where they interjected their own vain statements into the inspired writings, taking them to be the words of Allah. Allah says to them: 'So woe to those who write the "scripture" with their own hands, then say, "This is from Allah," in order to exchange it for a small price. Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn.' (*al-Baqara*: 79)

Allah says:

فَلِذَلِكَ فَادْعُ ۖ وَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ ۖ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَقُلْ ءَامَنْتُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ
 اللَّهُ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمُ ۖ اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ لَنَا أَعْمَلُنَا وَلَكُمْ
 أَعْمَلُكُمْ لَا حُجَّةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمُ ۖ اللَّهُ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٥﴾

So [Prophet] call people to that faith and follow the straight path as you have been commanded. Do not go by what they desire, but say, 'I believe in whatever Scripture God has sent down. I am commanded to bring justice between you. God is our Lord and your Lord – to us our deeds and to you yours, so let there be no argument between us and you – God will gather us together, and to Him we shall return' [15]

(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 15)

The demonstrative phrase 'So...' in this verse, refers to the preceding discussion regarding the fact that the people broke up their unity; contended among themselves as to what was revealed in the Scriptures and suppressed the words of Allah, even going so far as to pervert it for their own purposes.

Allah gave His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* the special mission to correct what they have done, to restore balance and order to the lives of the people and to keep them from future corruption and perversion of Allah's message. We note here the link between words and actions: 'So to that [religion of Allah] invite, [O Muhammad], and remain on a right course as you are commanded' (*ash-Shura*: 15). In other words, Allah commands the Messenger's deeds to match his words as He states elsewhere: 'Indeed, those who have said, "Our Lord is Allah" and then remained on a right course...' (*Fussilat*: 30).

As noted in previous sections, a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. So, when Allah gives the command 'and remain on a right course', He means for us to stay on the straight, main road, without veering into side streets. Hence, the names 'The Straight Path' and 'Soundness of the Way'⁽¹⁾ are both mentioned in the Quran since it guides us to our destination, namely Allah, along the shortest possible path—a straight one. Therefore, when Allah commands His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to do these things, it is as if He is saying: 'Pursue the right course because when you do that, your adherence to the Straight Path will help others accept true religion, listen to your words and believe that what you do is right'. Of course, it is well known that actions speak louder than words and so teaching people and counselling them through what we do is more effective for their conversion to true faith than mere talk. That is why one of the Companions came to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, say something definitive of true religion, such that I need not ask whether it be true. He replied, 'I found belief in Allah and now I continue pursuing the straight path.'⁽²⁾ This is one of many of his sayings on the matter.

(1) The description of the Quran as '*As-Sirat Al-Mustaqim*' (The Straight Path) appears in the opening chapter al-Fatiha 'Guide us to the straight path' (*al-Fatiha*: 6). The appellation '*Sawa' As-Sabil*' (Soundness of the Way) appears in the chapter of *al-Baqara*: 'Or do you intend to ask your Messenger as Musa (Moses) was asked before? And whoever exchanges faith for disbelief has certainly strayed from the soundness of the way' (*al-Baqara*: 108). The phrase in Arabic for 'Soundness of the Way' refers to the middle portion of a path or road which is the straightest and which leads most quickly to one's destination. Calling the Quran by this name, therefore, represents counsel to be moderate in all things.

(2) *This Hadith is narrated by Sufyan ibn `Abdullah Ath-Thiqafi, who extracted it for its authenticity. He related it as follows: 'I said, "O Messenger of Allah, say something=*

Then, after ordering His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to follow the Straight Path, Allah warns him not to adhere to what the world would have him do: ‘and do not follow their inclinations’ (*ash-Shura*: 15). Personal desires, likes and dislikes lead to contention and discord. One such worldly desire took its form in the peoples’ requests for the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to experiment with devotion to other deities, ‘Worship our gods, and we will worship your one God.’⁽¹⁾ It was because of this challenge to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* that Allah revealed the chapter of *al-Kafirun*. In the statement, ‘I have believed in what Allah has revealed...’ (*ash-Shura*: 15), the phrase ‘what Allah has revealed’ (literally book) is indefinite making the statement more inclusive. Indeed, Allah is referring to all those inspired writings revealed prior to this. It is as if Allah were asking the Jews and Christians why, if they believed in the Scriptures which had come before, they refused to believe in the message revealed to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. His Message is like those which had come before and in which they believed, so, why cut their belief off and pretend that Islam is a lie which they did because there were groups of Muslims who contended among themselves over certain points of doctrine?

The people of the Book would say to Muhammad’s followers, for example, ‘Our religion and holy books are older than yours as are our messengers. Your Quran even testifies of our special relationship to Allah, “O Children of Israel, remember My favour which I have bestowed upon you and that I preferred you over the worlds” (*al-Baqara*: 122). We are, therefore, given precedence over other peoples by testimony of your own holy book’!

= *definitive of true religion, such that I need not ask whether it be true.” He replied, “I found belief in Allah and now I continue pursuing the straight path.” Ahmad also rated it as authentic in his Musnad (384-385) as well as Muslim (38).*

- (1) *Al-Wahidi states in his Asbab An-Nuzul, on the circumstances surrounding the revelation of the verse of al-Kafirun, that a band of members from the tribe of Quraysh went up to Muhammad and said to him, ‘Come! Try our religion, and we will try yours; experiment with our gods, and we will attempt to worship your one God. If this new religion you bring is better than what we already have, we will freely participate in it and take our fair portion of it. If, however, our religion is better than the one which you bring, then have part of our faith and come worship with us.’ He said in response, “Allah forbid that I worship anything other than Him.” As part of the Prophet’s response, Allah revealed this verse, beginning with: ‘Say, “O disbelievers...”’ (al-Kafirun: 1).*

However, according to this argument, this precedence is not absolute, but rather a product of time and place. Otherwise, they would also take precedence over Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon them* which they do not claim to be the case.

Allah's statement '...and I have been commanded to do justice among you...' (*ash-Shura*: 15) means restoring balance and fairness without contention such that each person may have his rights. This means not giving preference or priority to one person over another in your views or treatment of them. One must even distribute his glances evenly, as the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* did when sitting amongst the Companions, showing no preference to one person to another. He did not want them to think that just because he had fixed his gaze longer on one or the other, that he thought that that person had more prestige or power or experience or strength. All were equal in his sight, which shows the Prophet's fair treatment and sense of justice with regard to his fellow human beings.

In the following verse, 'Allah is our Lord and your Lord.' (*ash-Shura*: 15) means that Allah *Glorified is He* is not the Lord of Muhammad's followers alone, but also of those who did not yet believe in Him. And as long as this is the case, His Lordship is over us all and His revealed path is one and final, made known to everyone. The next statement in the verse is one of many which indicate the perfect completeness of that lordship when Allah teaches us to: 'For us are our deeds, and for you your deeds' (*ash-Shura*: 15). This means, of course, that each person will have to answer for his or her actions alone, 'There is no [need for] argument between us and you' (*ash-Shura*: 15) meaning, no disagreement and discord which can lead only to dispute, stubbornness and enmity, and which do not lead back to the truth. In times of contention, each person will decide to follow his own path, rather than trying to come together.

Allah further takes up this subject in the chapter of *al-Kafirun*: 'Say, "O disbelievers! I do not worship what you worship. Nor are you worshippers of what I worship. Nor will I be a worshipper of what you worship. Nor will you be worshippers of what I worship. For you is your religion, and for me is my religion.'" (*al-Kafirun*: 1-6). Thus, there is no reason to argue here because the

discord between belief and doubt is unequivocal and final. This is unlike other aspects of human society, such as international politics. At times, certain nations cut off relations with each other, only to be forced to reconcile again by extenuating circumstances. This is not the case with faith and disbelief which can never be reconciled. That is why, when we attend closely to the statements made in chapter of *al-Kafirun*, we find the negation of any such reconciliation, whether now or in the future: ‘I do not worship what you worship. Nor are you worshippers of what I worship. (*al-Kafirun*: 2-3) referring to the present and ‘Nor will I be a worshipper of what you worship. Nor will you be worshippers of what I worship’ (*al-Kafirun*: 4-5) referring to the future.

At the end of the verse, Allah says, ‘Allah will bring us together, and to Him is the [final] destination’ (*ash-Shura*: 15). This means that, even if we continue contending with one another here on earth, Allah will bring us together to account for our deeds on the Day of Judgment, each person answering for his own actions here on earth. On that day, He will give each person that which is deserved; everyone would do well to leave the judgment of their deeds to the Just, which will show they are confident in their deeds on earth and that they are in the right. Indeed, Allah’s Wisdom is sufficient, ‘...and to Him is the [final] destination.’ (*ash-Shura*: 15) It is to Him that we shall return.


وَالَّذِينَ يُحَاجُّونَ فِي اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا اسْتُجِيبَ لَهُ، مَجْزُهُمْ
دَاحِضَةٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ ﴿١٦﴾

As for those who argue about God after He has been acknowledged, their argument has no weight with their Lord: anger will fall upon them and agonizing torment awaits them [16] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 16)

Allah’s statement: ‘And those who argue concerning Allah...’ (*ash-Shura*: 16) means that they still contend with each other over Allah’s religion. This statement refers to those who have already answered the call of the truth. And the statement: ‘...after He has been responded to...’ (*ash-Shura*: 16) means that those who argue over religion say to the believers, ‘Our religion and messengers are older than yours. Your very Quran testifies that we are the best people among those who have knowledge of divine religion’. Allah says

about them: ‘...their argument is invalid with their Lord’ (*ash-Shura*: 16). This means that their claims are futile and are not accepted by Allah and it is unwise to ever try to turn to them. The statement: ‘and upon them is [His] wrath...’ (*ash-Shura*: 16) refers to Allah’s Anger and denunciation of them since they did not stop disbelieving, but sought to bring others down into similar disbelief. In this, the disbelievers bear responsibility for their burdens and those of the people whom they caused to go astray. They, therefore, deserve this fate, namely Allah’s Wrath which is the first of many stages of His punishment. On that account, Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned in a Qudsi Hadith⁽¹⁾ how He was displeased with a group of people. They were cast out of His Mercy for good. To further illustrate this progression, take for example an owner of a company with employees and workers. One employee commits an error and the boss instantly gets mad. However, his heart softens and once again he leaves the employee to his duties. However, the employee soon commits another error and so his boss says, ‘I do not want to see you again’ as though the boss wanted to create a barrier or a veil between himself and the employee. Later, the boss reprimands the employee by deciding to fire him, just like when Allah cast stubborn disbelievers out of His Mercy.

In the same manner, Allah *Glorified is He* grew angry with those who contend over religion, after which He distanced and created a veil between them and Him, finally condemning them and casting them out of His Mercy, ‘and for them is a severe punishment’ (*ash-Shura*: 16).


 اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَالْمِيزَانَ وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ قَرِيبٌ

**It is God who has sent down the Scripture with Truth
and the Balance. How can you tell? The Last Hour
may well be near [17] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 17)**

In the statement: ‘...in truth...’ (*ash-Shura*: 17), ‘the truth’ refers to that which is fixed and does not change. It is certainly also that which remains victorious after all is said and done. Even if vain falsehood gets the better of

(1) A Qudsi Hadith is a narration, a Hadith which, from the perspective of its meaning, is from Allah *the Exalted* and from the perspective of its wording, from the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*.

truth from time to time, this is yet for a wise purpose, since falsehood nips at people's heels in order to repel them and cause them to inquire after truth and to seek refuge in its protection. The final victory, therefore, goes to the truth, no matter how long falsehood lasts or assails or roams freely. Accordingly, we previously said that falsehood is one of the soldiers in Allah's army.

Let us now draw from the imagery, which Allah uses, to clarify the relationship between truth and falsehood. Allah *Glorified is He* states: 'He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity, and the torrent carries rising foam. And from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is a foam like it. Thus, Allah presents [the example of] truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it vanishes, [being] cast off; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth. Thus, does Allah present examples' (*ar-Ra'd*: 17). Therefore, the truth is that which remains, whereas falsehood is that which fades and vanishes. Because of this, we see the attempts by those who fight against the Quran's message including efforts to criticize its rhetorical style. For example, they often disparage the following verse: '...and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, while the word of Allah - that is the highest' (*at-Tawba*: 40) saying that this is an incorrect statement since the cause of those bent on denying the truth was already utterly low, without Allah doing anything to it, the same being true of Allah's cause being supreme from the beginning. This contradiction is the result of a lack of understanding of Allah and of their lack of understanding of linguistic style of the Quran. This verse means that Allah *Glorified is He* made their cause utterly low; it is the object of a change which Allah put into effect. As for Allah's Cause, however, it is not such an object, since His cause is supreme from the very beginning. It was not initially low and then somehow made high by Allah, which is evidenced by the fact that it is the subject of the sentence, rather than the object.

The statement '...and the balance...' (*ash-Shura*: 17) means that Allah brought something tangible for mankind, an instrument used to differentiate between truth and falsehood⁽¹⁾ by measuring proper weights. So, the issue is

(1) Falsehood; This is the contextual meaning of this word, which was mentioned by Al-Qurtubi in his interpretation (9/6058). He mentioned a few definitions to it: =

not random, but rather, there is an established, palpable measure for insuring justice and equality. The only difference in measuring weight is in the substance placed on the balances. A measure of wheat or potatoes, for example, is not worth the same as a measure of gold. We find certain goldsmiths who fashion balances with a glass casing around them, in order to block out more air, which might interfere with the measurement. In this way, they create their balances with the precision necessary for proper measurement. With the least amount of tilt due to this precision, measuring gold yields a different weight than when measuring potatoes, for example.

In short, the word 'balance' means those laws which govern what lies between truth and falsehood. In the chapter of *al-Hadid*, Allah says: 'We have already sent Our messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice' (*al-Hadid*: 25). In other words, justice and truth were the final goal of bestowing revelation on chosen apostles. Allah *Glorified is He* brought the balance of revelation in order to give every person that which he rightfully deserves and to mete out a just reward to those who should receive it. He also did this so that no one would take more than he deserves and that one person might not violate the rights of others by taking that which does not belong to him.

This verse: 'And what will make you perceive? Perhaps the Hour is near.' (*ash-Shura*: 17) refers to the fact that those who disbelieved in Allah's message had previously asked His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to bring them word of the exact time of the Last Hour, as the Quran relates about them elsewhere: 'And they ask, "When is this promise, if you should be

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- =
- balance= justice, according to Ibn `Abbas and the majority of interpreters
 - balance= what was revealed to human beings from divine orders
 - balance= justice in what was allowed for us to do and what were prohibited from, according to Qatada
 - balance= Al-Qurtubi said, 'These definitions are close in meaning.'
 - balance= getting rewarded for doing good deeds and getting punished for sinning
 - balance= of weights, which was sent down from Allah in order for people not to experience injustice if and when they misuse it, according to Mujahid
- It was also said that this 'balance' is personified in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by which he judges between people through the teachings and orders of the Quran.

truthful?’” (*al-Anbiya*: 38) They sought out this knowledge out of sarcasm and ridiculing the idea of the Last Hour. We also note that the verb *yudrika* (perceive) appears in the present tense in the phrase, ‘And what will make you perceive?’ (*ash-Shura*: 17) In another context, it appears conjugated in the past tense: ‘The Inevitable Reality. What is the Inevitable Reality? And what can make you know what the Inevitable Reality is?’ (*al-Haqqa*: 1-3) Here, the fact that the verb in the phrase ‘And what could make you know...’ (*al-Haqqa*: 3) signifies that it is an eternal truth which was unknown before, but which is now acknowledged. As for the statement ‘And what will make you perceive?’ (*ash-Shura*: 17), it refers to the fact that none other but Allah will inform the disbelievers about the Last Hour. In another verse, Allah refers to revelation of this matter in terms of the future: ‘None will reveal its time except Him.’ (*al-A‘raf*: 187), meaning, it will never come until Allah *Glorified is He* reveals it.

يَسْتَعْجِلُ بِهَا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مُشْفِقُونَ مِنْهَا وَيَعْلَمُونَ
أَنَّهَا الْحَقُّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ يُمَارُونَ فِي السَّاعَةِ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ ﴿١٨﴾

**Those who do not believe in it seek to hasten it, but the
believers stand in awe of it. They know it to be the Truth;
those who argue about the Hour are far, far astray [18]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 18)**

In the affirmation that they ‘are impatient for it’ (*ash-Shura*: 18), ‘it’ refers to the Last Hour. This verse refers to the people as ‘Those who do not believe in it...’ (*ash-Shura*: 18), they do not know of the Last Hour and do not have faith that it will come, nor do they know what will happen when it comes. For this reason, they ask the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* to tell them about it, saying things like, ‘Give us word about the coming of this hour, for we wish to see it!’ out of sarcasm and ridicule. If they truly knew what horrors awaited them at the Last Hour, they would not seek its coming so vehemently and in such sarcastic tones. This, then, is the state of disbelievers regarding the Day of Judgment.

Those who do believe in it, on the other hand, are in an entirely different state: ‘but those who believe are fearful of it...’ (*ash-Shura*: 18). In other

words, they fear the horrors of the Last Hour when they realise that what has been said on the matter is true. They also fear the sharp precision of the final accounting of our lives at that hour and the torment which it will bring. In the phrase ‘...and know that it is the truth...’ (*ash-Shura*: 18), Allah did not say, ‘true’ instead He said, ‘the truth’ so there is no use trying to make a lie of it, or even to doubt it in any way. For this reason, Allah describes those who contend over the matter of the Last Hour as being in extreme error: ‘Unquestionably, those who dispute concerning the Hour are in extreme error’ (*ash-Shura*: 18). Again, the idea of calling something into question, especially in this case, is only futile squabble which does not bring people nearer to the truth.

The description of these disbelievers as having gone far astray is appropriate, since even the simplest rational consideration of the matter confirms the coming of the Day of Judgment and the necessity of it as far as our mortal lives are concerned. This is because, if we contemplate the reality of our lives, we find that the acts we have committed in this world provide the starting point for our reward or punishment in the next. It is therefore imperative to furnish a reward to those good people who have done good, and a punishment to those who have committed acts of evil.

Over the course of the early years of life, people receive education as students at school, wherein teachers administer monthly tests to them, then mark the errors on those tests in red so that the student knows which mistakes he made and how to correct them. On the final exam, however, the errors are not marked in red; rather, the test is simply given a final grade, pass or fail, which represents a kind of final accounting, and a reward or punishment depending on how well the student did on the exam. If this is how people everywhere organise their evaluation of students, then we should not disbelieve the fact that Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* does the same thing with our very lives. There are many different types of people who all respond to Allah’s Message differently—the believer and the disbeliever, the obedient and the rebellious, the doer of good deeds and the doer of bad deeds, etc. How, then could we possibly evaluate each of these as equal to all the others?

Anyone with a sense of justice would say that no transgressor dies until Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* seeks His vengeance against that person, since reason

says that it is not right for such a person to commit his crimes without then receiving a punishment. If any rational, thinking person was to see a transgressor die happily, without any ill will coming upon him, that thinking person would have to conclude that there is another life beyond this world, in which the transgressor is punished for his wickedness on earth. If this were not so, then criminals and transgressors would win and continue committing their crimes, and that punishment which they deserve in the Hereafter would be lost.

اللَّهُ لَطِيفٌ بِعِبَادِهِ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ ﴿١٩﴾

God is most subtle towards His creatures; He provides [bounti- fully] for whoever He will; He is the Powerful, the Almighty [19] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 19)

The meaning of the phrase ‘Most-Kind’ is that Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* is extremely compassionate to His slaves.

He forgives aplenty and does not chastise any of His faithful slaves the first time a crime is committed. We see this in a story⁽¹⁾ from the time of `Umar *Allah be pleased with him* in which a crowd of people brought forward a woman for judgment on claims that she was a thief. The woman said to him, ‘By Allah, I have never stolen anything before now.’ He *Allah be pleased with him* responded, ‘You have said a lie for Allah would not uncover you for the first crime.’⁽²⁾ Regarding this matter, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* states, ‘...although He pardons much’ (*ash-Shura*: 30) referring to those faults which will yet emerge; He does not chastise those who commit errors excepting those most apparent mistakes.

(1) The story of `Umar ibn Al- Khattab, with the woman whose son stole for the first time

(2) Al-Bayhaqi extracts this Hadith in his greater collection of Hadiths of the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him (286-288), from a Hadith stating that `Umar brought forth a thief, who said, ‘By Allah, I have never stolen before now.’ `Umar responded: ‘You have told a lie of that which Allah grants unto a faithful slave upon his first guilty act.’ He then forbade the man from future theft. Ibn Dawud also extracts this Hadith in his *Az-Zuhd* (51-58); likewise, Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, in his *Treasure of the Workers*, from the sayings attributed to `Umar (Hadith #13949). Ibn Hajar writes in the margins that Ibn Wahab related this Hadith from his mosque, being endowed with extraordinary knowledge of his Prophet as evidence of the correctness of this saying.

Among other meanings of the phrase 'Most-Kind' is that of one who is precise, whose wisdom and forethought penetrate all things deeply. We have stated previously, regarding material objects, that nothing can withstand Him, no matter how miniscule or violent or recalcitrant. This has been portrayed to us in the example of someone who constructs a house in the woods, placing iron bars on the windows to keep wolves and beasts away and from coming inside. However, that person soon finds flies and mosquitoes present in the surrounding environment, and so he returns from his labours with a finer, tighter screen for preventing bugs from entering the house.

In the same way that the man in this example builds his house so that nothing, not even tiny bugs, gets past the exterior, one of the meanings of this description of The Most-High as 'Most-Kind' is that nothing gets past Him nor hides from Him, no matter how miniscule. This usage differs slightly from how we employ the word 'kind' when referring to a well-mannered person of good moral pith. In such a case, we say he is 'kind' to mean that he is gentle and mild in his treatment of others.

Thus, it is out of His Kindness for us that He provides, for example, a way for us to repent that is accepted by Him. He has also allotted seasons of worship wherein the worth of the good that we do multiplies and the evil of our bad deeds is diminished. These times are special occasions for obedience and for obtaining more value from good deeds in Allah's sight. It is out of Allah's Kindness that, in such special periods of devotion, He makes one good deed the worth of ten, up to seven hundred times; and as for a bad deed, He diminishes it to one.⁽¹⁾

We then read Allah's statement '...He provides sustenance for whomever He wills – for He alone is Powerful, Almighty!' (*ash-Shura*: 19) This means that he sustains whomever He pleases because He is the Creator, and He is that one who calls His creations unto accountability for His blessing of them

(1) *This Hadith is extracted in Kitab Al-`Iman, as well as by Ahmad in his Musnad (6898, 8957, 10061), from a Hadith quoted by Abu Hurayra: 'For those who have not done a good deed, write "he has committed one good deed." But if he has truly committed a good deed, then write "he has done ten good deeds." And for those who do one bad deed, do not write "he has committed one bad deed." But if he has truly committed that bad deed, then write "he has done one bad deed."'*

with sustenance. In this, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* is also the Strong, since kindness does not come without strength. Indeed, He is the Almighty and the Subduer, whom nothing can restrain and whom nothing can conquer

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الْآخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهُ فِي حَرْثِهِ وَمَنْ كَانَ
يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ نَصِيبٍ ﴿٢٠﴾

If anyone desires a harvest in the life to come, We shall increase it for him; if anyone desires a harvest in this world, We shall give him a share of it, but in the Hereafter he will have no share [20] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 20)

The literal meaning of the word *al-harth* (harvest) is the tilling of the earth with the stirrings of a plough for the purpose of sowing seeds therein. The tilling is necessary because small plants are not powerful enough to pierce through the hard soil themselves. For this reason, we break up the soil for them, so as to facilitate their growth. After breaking through the soil, small seedlings then need air; by turning the soil over through tilling, we allow this needed air to enter. Back when harvesting the ground was the reason fruits were produced by the earth, it became known by the name ‘harvest’ meaning those fruits of the earth which are expected to be gained through cultivation.

In the Quran, we see the figurative idea of sowing and harvesting, for example, in Allah’s statement ‘But whenever he prevails, he goes about the earth spreading corruption and destroying [man’s] tilth and progeny: and Allah does not love corruption.’ (*al-Baqara*: 205) We see it elsewhere as well, such as Allah’s following statement ‘and [remember] Dawud (David) and Sulaiman (Solomon) – [how it was] when both gave judgment concerning the field into which some people’s sheep had strayed...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 78) referring in this instance to actual fields

Thus, the meaning of the phrase ‘To him who desires a harvest in the life to come...’ (*ash-Shura*: 20) is that the reward of the Hereafter is eternal and its blessings everlasting, in paradise. In this way, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* clarifies things pertaining to the true religion using images from the reality of our lives, in order to help our minds approximate them better. We read, for

example, 'Truly shall the believers have success' (*al-Mu'minun*: 1). They have success, those who are able to gain their desired results from cultivation of the earth, almost being to the point of reaping the fruits of their labours: likewise, the believer, who gains an eternal reward and firmly established blessings.

In sum, the verse, 'To him who desires a harvest in the life to come, We shall grant an increase in his harvest...' (*ash-Shura*: 20) means that such a person will find increase in the Hereafter, and that his reward will be more than he has been hoping for; it also means that the good things of this world will not be kept from him, either. In other words, a person's efforts and tiresome toil to do good while in this world do not prevent him from obtaining the practical fruits of his labours: '...Verily, We do not fail to requite any who persevere in doing good' (*al-Kahf*: 30). Then, we read '...whereas to him who desires [but] a harvest in this world, We [may] give something thereof...' (*ash-Shura*: 20), namely, the fruits of this world. In like fashion as those who obtain a harvest in the next life, those who seek after what this world has to offer are not kept from enjoying the pleasures and delights thereof, but by rushing headlong after earthly rewards, they are prevented from securing such rewards in the Hereafter: '...but he will have no share in [the blessings of] the life to come.' (*ash-Shura*: 20) In other words, he will have no good portion or reward in the Hereafter since he chased after glory and fame and wealth and riches in this world. As long as someone seeks after something for the right reasons, he shall obtain it, even if that person is a disbeliever. Likewise, if a believer is idle and neglectful in seeking good things, then he will not obtain them since he did not pursue them for the right cause.

Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* does not accept any actions except those dedicated especially to Him; and those who wish for a harvest in this world, do not have Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* on their minds at all. For this reason, many people ask about the fate of those scholars and inventors who did a service to humanity through their inventions and discoveries since their minds were preoccupied with things of this world. Theirs is a fate in hell since they did what they did for the sake of people and not Allah—they were in it for the fame, which they took as their reward from this world.

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ شَرَعُوا لَهُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا لَمْ يَأْذَنْ بِهِ اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا
كَلِمَةُ الْفَصْلِ لَفُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٢١﴾

**How can they believe in others who ordain for them things
which God has not sanctioned in the practice of their faith?
If it were not for God's decree concerning the final Decision,
judgement would already have been made between them.**

**The evildoers will have a grievous punishment [21]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 21)**

The general question put forth by this verse is: Why did the disbelievers act as if Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the message which he brought forth were lies? Do they believe in deities other than Allah, who gave law and a righteous Way for them to follow? Did those other deities bestow a religion upon them in which they profess a belief such that they therefore leave behind the religion of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? By the phrase ‘...deities who have ordained for them a religion to which Allah has not consented...’ (*ash-Shura*: 21), the verse is referring to those things aside from Allah which the disbelievers would worship. For example, some would worship the sun, others the moon, trees, rocks or angels. This verse asks: Do these other gods invite people to follow a set of religious laws? Have they established prescriptions for certain actions, and proscriptions against others, so that we know how to live our lives?

Thus, it is in vain that people worship gods which do not provide a right Way or spiritual obligations. In fact, those who do worship such gods do so because of this fact. There is no moral path or duties, and thus people who worship these other gods are happy to follow those urges of superficial piety found within themselves; indeed, what is easier for a person than a religion without spiritual obligations? Religious devotion per se is nothing more than the obedience of the worshipper to the object of worship in terms of prescribed and proscribed behaviour, and a system of reward and punishment determining that which is returned unto those who are obedient and disobedient to the established law.

In sum, then, this verse points out the fact that the inanimate objects chosen by disbelievers as things to be worshipped did not give any word to their

followers; neither commanding nor legislating anything to them in the way of religious duties. Rather, these disbelievers made such duties up for themselves, following their own whims in order to satisfy their own internal sentiments. Indeed, these multiple gods were created by the people's hands, or through their own faulty, mistaken thoughts. For this reason, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* states: 'It was not Allah who instituted (superstitions like those of) a slit-ear she-camel, or a she-camel let loose for free pasture, or idol sacrifices for twin-births in animals, or stallion-camels freed from work: It is blasphemers who invent a lie against Allah. But most of them lack wisdom.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 103) He affirms that these people attributed lies to Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* and by their own volition created religious injunctions which were not revealed by Allah's Power. Where did the people get their superstitions like the rules regarding a slit-ear she-camel, or a she-camel put out to pasture, or idol sacrifices for twin-births in animals or stallion-camels freed from work? These proscriptions did not come from Allah *the Glorified Exalted*; rather, the people invented them, making a lie against Him.

Take the slit-ear she-camel, a she-camel which has given birth five times. To them, such a she-camel was past her time, so they would slit her ear and leave her as a free-roaming she-camel, neither to be ridden nor to have her milk drunk, nor to be kept from drinking water or roaming the pasture as she pleased. These matters were not established by Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* who even permitted such a she-camel's meat to be used for its benefits, let alone her milk. Likewise, a she-camel let loose for free pasture (if one of the people complained of an ache or a mishap that befell him) it was believed that the situation would be rectified by letting the she-camel out to pasture, neither to be ridden nor to have her milk drunk, nor to be kept from drinking water or roaming the pasture as she pleased.

Idol sacrifices for twin-births involved prescriptions surrounding the delivery of newborn animals. If a sheep, for example, gave birth to a male lamb, they would slaughter it in sacrifice to their gods and give the meat to the servants and gatekeepers of the *Ka'ba*; if it birthed a female, they would keep it for the purposes of birthing future lambs. However, if the sheep gave birth to twins, one male and one female, they would preserve them both, since

the female was related to her brother, the male lamb (which they would otherwise sacrifice to their gods).

Finally, the stallion-camel freed from work is a male camel whose back was protected from people riding on it by law after he had impregnated ten she-camels. His siring of ten calves was a sign to the people that he was past his time, neither to be ridden nor to be kept from drinking water or roaming the pasture as he pleased.

All these things which the people of that time prohibited unto themselves were permitted to them by Allah *the Glorified Exalted*. Thus, His statement to them in the chapter of *al-An'am*: '[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? Is it, perchance, that you [yourselves] were witnesses when Allah enjoined [all] this upon you?" And who could be 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) In this then, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* asks them to tell Him who prohibited these things '...Is it, perchance, that you [yourselves] were witnesses when Allah enjoined [all] this upon you? ...' (*al-An'am*: 144). By 'this' in the phrase 'enjoined this', the verse is referring to those proscriptions which the people themselves put into place, making a lie of the fact that Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* had allowed them certain actions and behaviours. Thus, the people made themselves receivers of Allah's law, into lawgivers, prescribing rules for themselves rather than trying to encounter such moral codes in Allah's true religion.

Next, we read in the verse under consideration: '...Now were it not for [Allah's] decree on the final judgment...' (*ash-Shura*: 21) meaning the decision against their destruction and delaying their punishment until the Hereafter,

‘...all would indeed have been decided between them [in this world]...’ (*ash-Shura*: 21) meaning a speedy punishment for them in this world.

When we look at those things which Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* has permitted and prohibited, we find that such injunctions are based on a consideration of what is useful, and on protection from that which is harmful to people. That which is permitted is of benefit to human beings, and that which is prohibited is detrimental, which is why we see some Orientalists arguing over those things which Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* prohibited from the Israelites from eating, for example, even though they are not harmful and other peoples would eat them without any negative result.

Indeed, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* prohibited the Israelites from eating any type of cattle or camel with uncloven hooves, as well as animals of webbed feet, such as ducks, geese, and ostriches. He also prohibited them from eating the fat of animals: ‘...excepting that which is in their backs or entrails or that which is within the bone...’ (*al-An‘am*: 146). But all these things were permitted for people other than the Israelites to eat, and, moreover, they are not harmful when ingested. As to the reasoning behind these prohibitions, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* states, ‘So, then, for the wickedness committed by those who followed the Jewish faith did We deny unto them certain of the good things of life which [a foretime] had been allowed to them...’ (*an-Nisa*: 160). When the Israelites fell into wickedness, then, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* chastised them so as to help them see their error, by prohibiting them from eating that of which other people were allowed to partake.

Moreover, we note how this verse expresses the futility which they brought forth by professing a religion which came from themselves: ‘Or have they other deities who have ordained for them a religion to which Allah has not consented?’ (*ash-Shura*: 21) Their vain inclination is figuratively called ‘religion’ because they have strong faith in albeit it oversteps the bounds of Allah’s decrees, as Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* states: ‘For you is your religion, and for me is my religion.’ (*al-Kafirun*: 6) Their faith is dependent upon what they believe in, the term ‘religion’ meaning the beliefs professed by man.

The last part of this verse states: ‘...but verily, grievous suffering awaits the evildoers [in the life to come].’ (*ash-Shura*: 21) Transgressors either do

evil to others or unto themselves, the latter being the most horrible of transgression. It is at least reasonable to expect people to do evil unto their enemies; but how does one commit evil unto oneself, the being underneath one's own skin? The answer is that people inflict evil upon themselves when they subject themselves to punishment and prevent themselves from obtaining a reward and a blessing in the Hereafter. That is why evil committed to the self, in terms of religious devotion and faith in Allah, is the harshest form of transgression: '...for, behold, such [a false] ascribing of divinity is indeed an awesome wrong!' (*Luqman*: 13)

تَرَى الظَّالِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَهُمْ وَاقِعٌ بِهِمْ
وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فِي رَوْضَاتِ الْجَنَّاتِ
لَهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ ﴿٢٢﴾

**You will see them fearful because of what they have done:
punishment is bound to fall on them – but those who believe
and do good deeds will be in the flowering meadows of the
Gardens. They will have whatever they wish from their Lord:
this is the great bounty [22] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 22)**

'In this verse, the Arabic word for '[In that life to come,] you will see...' (*ash-Shura*: 22), '*tara*' refers to all that which we perceive by means of physical sight; the phrase 'full of fear' (*ash-Shura*: 22) means that the evildoers will be frightened and terrified, and this '...at [the thought of] what they have earned...' (*ash-Shura*: 22) meaning at the thought of the reward meted out to them for their evil deeds. As noted before, the Arabic verb for 'they have earned' (*kasaba*, *yaksabu*) refers literally to obtaining an increased amount of capital, i.e. profits or returns; in a figurative sense, this form of the verb is collocated with 'good', as in 'to earn a good reward'. Another version of the verb, with the same root but different form, 'to be possessed of' (*iktasaba*) gives the sense of intentional attempts to invent or do something, and is often collocated with 'evil'. However, in this verse, the verb 'to earn' (*kasaba*) is used to refer to evil deeds, rather than its normal, more positive connotation. We see this elsewhere in the Quran such as following statement by Allah: 'Yea! Those who earn [*kasaba*] evil and by their sinfulness are engulfed...'

(*al-Baqara*: 81). This form of the verb, which is normally employed in reference to positive gains, is used here because, for evildoers, their wicked deeds have become like good deeds in their eyes, something normal and natural, just as good deeds seem natural to the righteous. When an evildoer commits a bad deed or a crime, it does not wear him out because he has become accustomed to it and even intimate with it.

Moving on, the phrase ‘...full of fear at [the thought of] what they have earned...’ (*ash-Shura*: 22) refers to how the evildoers fearfully imagine their state on the Day of Judgment since they were not afraid while living in this mortal world and did not give thought to this Final Day. The phrase ‘...for [now] it is bound to fall back upon them...’ (*ash-Shura*: 22) means that there is no escape from the final accounting, which Allah, in His Wisdom, has promised and made known to all people. These statements might also refer to those evildoers who begin to fear their final judgment while they are yet in this world, which indicates knowledge of one’s wrongs and a sense of compunction present in human beings. A person knows when he has committed a wicked deed, and he knows the nature of his crime. Likewise, he knows that he is accountable for such things, hence why he begins to fear and to feel the pangs of conscience.

In contrast to the state of evildoers, we read, ‘...And in the flowering meadows of the gardens [of paradise you will see] those who have attained to faith and done righteous deeds: all that they might desire shall they have with their Sustainer: [and] this, this is the great bounty.’ (*ash-Shura*: 22) This is a true intimation from Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* since the result of faith and good works is paradisiacal gardens meaning the refuge and rest of those most wonderful spaces to be found in paradise at the Day of Judgment; such places are even to be found on earth, albeit through imagination and longing for them. Therefore, the martyr who dies for Allah and who finds himself on the path of Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* does not come to tread that path except for his trust in this ultimate reward. And he who is killed while striving for the cause of Allah will go to a life much better than this one.

We have previously recalled the story of one of the Companions to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who heard directly from

Allah's Messenger about the final reward for martyrs. He asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, is it not true that the only thing standing between me and paradise is that I fight those [disbelievers] until the death?' He *peace and blessings be upon him* answered, "yes." So the Companion, who had placed a date in his mouth while speaking with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* rushed off to die a martyr before he even had a chance to chew the date in his mouth.⁽¹⁾ The reason is that he trusted the truthfulness of Allah's words regarding the final reward reserved for martyrs: 'But do not think of those that have been slain in Allah's Cause as dead. Nay, they are alive! With their Sustainer have they their sustenance' (*Al- 'Imran*: 169). Indeed, martyrs are alive, alive with their Lord, which is the peak of honour, strength, and blessing, a particularity which those other than martyrs do not obtain. This is because martyrdom facilitates movement from one life to the next, since they do not die, but rather resurrect with the rest of humanity and are made alive.

One poet⁽²⁾ expressed this idea when he wrote the following lines concerning the foremost of martyrs, Hamza ibn `Abd Al-Muttalib *Allah be pleased with him* Prophet Muhammad's uncle:

O Hamza, uncle of the Chosen, you are without exception
Foremost among all the martyrs of the earth,
And protection is enough for you, choice among martyrs, protection
From that death connecting two worlds, this one and the next, one to the other.

Next, we read the statement '...And in the flowering meadows of the gardens [of paradise]...' (*ash-Shura*: 22). The phrase 'flowering meadows' refers to gardens full of greenery, flowers, blooms and fruits such that one would catch the wafting aroma of its fragrances if one entered it, watching the

(1) *Al-Bukhari extracts this Hadith for its correctness (Hadith #374), quoting from Jabir ibn `Abdullah, who states: 'A man asked Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him "If you saw me killed while fighting for the true religion, where would I go?" Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him responded, "To paradise." The man, who had a date in his mouth, rushed off to combat the disbelievers until he was killed.'* An-Nasa'i also extracts this Hadith, in his *Sunnan (Hadith #3130)*, as well as Ahmad in his *Musnad (Hadith #13794)*.

(2) The poet is Sheikh Ash-Sha`rawi *Allah rest his soul*.

streams of water running past. Those who believe in Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* and do good works in this life will be in the flowering meadows of the gardens of paradise meaning the most beautiful places therein found. Moreover, ‘...all that they might desire shall they have with their Sustainer...’ (*ash-Shura*: 22), a state which is more honourable and grand than any other conceivable blessing since believers find themselves in the bounty of paradise and its refuge from the world. Going further, all this abundance is enjoyed in the presence of their Lord, hence how Allah concludes this verse: ‘...[and] this, this is the great bounty’ (*ash-Shura*: 22), meaning Allah’s favour and blessing upon them. Therefore, when a person contemplates this abiding, everlasting blessing which Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* gives unto His believing slaves, any hardship in worship of or obedience to Allah becomes easy. In this situation, a person sees that such hardships are easy when he connects them (in his mind) to the reward received for undertaking them.

Humans become worn out by the world. They spend dozens of years seeking knowledge in school, or learning a trade or profession, carrying all the hardships and dangers that go along with this, in order to simply meet the needs of daily life. If they toil and sweat and expend more effort than this, they might even obtain a degree of opulence and luxury, perhaps employing servants to wait on them or cooks to prepare food for them. Such domestic employees work for people as a recompense for the hard work expended to get to the point where people can afford such luxuries. However, that recompense could be lost at any time if, for example, the servants and cooks became angry with their employer and decided to defy his orders.

People find a completely different situation if they strive for a reward in the Hereafter since following the injunctions of true religion is a straightforward matter, not requiring of humans all the toil and sweat and late nights and working during the day and preoccupation of mind. And even though adhering to Allah’s Commandments is a painless effort, it carries with it a great and limitless reward which we cannot possibly imagine.

As noted, the most which humankind has achieved through scientific progress can be seen in somethings like hotels and travel services, where a person can press a button on a machine from which coffee or tea is produced

and served. But this is a device, its motor could stall, impeding its ability to dispense the desired refreshments; the sought-after reward is not afforded in this case. However, in the Hereafter, the final reward is firmly established and everlasting and nothing can disturb or spoil it. It does not require any request or pushing of buttons or the summoning of a servant to provide it. In paradise, we only need to call up the desired objects in our minds and we will find it instantaneously in our hands. We see this in the following Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘The reward of the Hereafter contains that which eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor occurred to the mind of man.’⁽¹⁾

We read of this in the chapter of *al-Baqara*, for example: ‘But unto those who have attained to faith and do good works give the glad tiding that theirs shall be gardens through which running waters flow. Whenever they are granted fruits therefrom as their appointed sustenance, they will say, “It is this that in days of yore was granted to us as our sustenance!” – for they shall be given something that will recall that [past]. And there shall they have spouses pure,⁽²⁾ and there shall they abide.’ (*al-Baqara*: 25) And, Allah willing, we will find in paradise those things which we used to eat here on earth. Or at least, this is how we now imagine them to be: ‘...they will say, “It is this that in days of yore was granted to us as our sustenance!...”’ (*al-Baqara*: 25) However, when we actually taste such things in paradise, we will find that they differ completely from those culinary sensations experienced in mortality. This is because the blessings and pleasures of paradise do not run out or continue in one monotonous state; they are that much more desirable than what we are used to in the mortal realm.

In all, then, we behold in these verses the vision of an eternal reward which softens the trials which come as we follow Allah’s Methodology. It would be enough even if the reward for obedience was only peace and happiness on

(1) *Muslim extracts this for its correctness (2824), as does Ahmad in his Musnad (462-466), and Abu Na’im (262-263) in Al-Haliyya from a Hadith quoted by Abu Hurayra.*

(2) *At-Tabari states in his commentary (391-395): ‘The term “mutahhara” (pure) means that the (female) spouses are purified of all pains and annoyances resulting from undesirable bodily functions and substances as experienced by women while on Earth. These include menstruation, childbirth, faeces, urine, mucus, spittle, semen and other physical annoyances, pains and unwanted substances such as these.’*

earth for humans. It would suffice us to have peace of mind, tranquillity of soul and a sense of reassurance about the future, a point expressed by the poet⁽¹⁾ when he writes:

Said the astronomer and the doctor both,
 'Human bodies do not resurrect!' I replied,
 'If what you say is true, then I lose nothing;
 'But if what I say is true, the loss is yours.'⁽²⁾

For this reason, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* when He wanted to describe paradise to us did not describe it as it is, since it is above human capacity to imagine what it would be like. Rather, Allah uses things we know and which are like unto paradise in order to portray it to us. Indeed, if the reward of the Hereafter contains that which the eye has not seen, nor ear heard nor occurred to the mind of man, then how can we expect it to be illustrated to us in its fullness? Humans cannot assign a word to something unless it is an object already known to them; as for those things which they know nothing about, it follows that they also cannot know the right word for them. Thus, there are no words in our language to describe the eternal reward of paradise, as we see in the following statement: 'The parable of the paradise promised to those who are conscious of Allah [is that of a garden]...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 35), a garden in which certain things are found.

This poses the question, to whom is such a reward promised? The answer is that it is promised to those who believe in Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* while on earth, and who join their faith with good works. We see an injunction to bring together faith and good works in various places in the Quran, such as the following verse: '[But] behold, as for those who say, "Our Sustainer is

(1) Abu Al-'Ala' Al-Ma'arri, Ahmad ibn 'Abdullah, a poet and philosopher. He was born in Ma'arra in modern-day Syria in the year 363 A.H/ 973 CE, and he began composing poetry when he was only eleven years old. He travelled to Baghdad in 398 A.H to live there. Upon his passing, 84 poets stood at his grave to eulogize him. He famously abstained from eating meat. His works include *Luzum Ma La Yalzam*, *Suqt Az-Zand and Daw' As-Saqt*. He died in the year 449 A.H/ 1057 CE.

(2) These two lines come from one of Abu Al-'Ala' Al-Ma'arri's poems written in the *Bahr* (meter) *Al-Kamil* and comprising seven total lines.

Allah”, and then steadfastly pursue the right way – upon them do angels often descend, [saying:] “Fear not and grieve not, but receive the glad tiding of that paradise which has been promised to you!”” (*Fussilat*: 30).

After this, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* states:

ذَٰلِكَ الَّذِي يُبَشِّرُ اللَّهَ عِبَادَهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا
الْمُودَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَمَن يَقْرِضْ حَسَنَةً نَّزِدْ لَهُ فِيهَا حُسْنًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

It is of this that God gives good news to His servants who believe and do good deeds. Say [Prophet], ‘I ask no reward from you for this, only the affection due to kin.’ If anyone does good, We shall increase it for him; God is most forgiving and most appreciative [23] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 23)

In this verse, the word ‘that [bounty]’ (*ash-Shura*: 23) refers to the reward in paradise discussed above. The phrase ‘...whereof Allah gives the glad tiding to such of His servants as attain to faith and do righteous deeds...’ (*ash-Shura*: 23) indicates the ‘glad tiding’ of a good reward had in Allah’s sight. After this statement, the context changes to address another topic, concerning Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: that of inviting others to come unto the true religion. ‘...Say [O Prophet]: “No reward do I ask of you for this [message]...”’ (*ash-Shura*: 23) meaning Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* commands Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to say that he seeks no recompense for the invitation to true religion and the mission he has undertaken for their benefit. Moreover, he is never supposed to ask for such a repayment unless he does something truly extraordinary which does in fact deserve reward.

All of Allah’s messengers *peace be upon them* have said similar things with regard to recompense for their mission as prophets, since people are accustomed to repaying those who render them a service or some good, or to one who hints at signs of his own misery. We therefore read prohibitions against repayment in the words of many prophets throughout the Quran: ‘And, O my people, no benefit do I ask of you for this [message]: my reward rests with none but Allah...’ (*Hud*: 29). The reason that a prophet’s reward is with Allah

is that he, as a messenger, performs a grand, unique, and honourable role, the value of which humankind cannot fully appreciate and the deserved reward of which humans cannot grant. Hence the affirmation that none but Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* who sent the prophets, can truly repay them.

As noted, all of Allah's messengers have enjoined the people against repayment. All but Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* that is, and Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. This is because, when Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) began inviting others to the true religion, he first called upon his father Azar, from whom it would be illogical to expect repayment; he therefore did not tell his father not to reward him. So, it is with Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* who first called upon Pharaoh when undertaking to invite people to the true religion. Since Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* already owed, a favour to Pharaoh, in Pharaoh's sight, as he was brought up in Pharaoh's house, and it would not make sense for Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to have asked Pharaoh to abstain from repaying him.

In sum, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is commanded to tell the people not to reward him for that missionary endeavour which he has undertaken for their benefit. Likewise, he is to inform them that his reward lies with Allah, who sent him, and Who can fully appreciate the Prophet's mission. He is to ask the people for nothing '...other than [that you should] love your fellow men...' (*ash-Shura: 23*). Here he requests that the people have compassion on their neighbours, or the turning of their hearts to other people in love, and that they treat those around them with all due appreciation and generosity.

It is as though Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were saying to them: 'Verily was I sent (as a messenger) unto all people everywhere. And despite this, you received me with victimization, defied me in enmity, maltreated my family and friends, and forced me to seek refuge with those other than you—sometimes as an aimless itinerant, other times with the other tribes. Moreover, you compelled my friends and family to flee their homes and their lands. My ancestral line is spread out in the midst of Quraysh, even in Medina, wherein my maternal uncles from the Bani An-Najar tribe reside. You could therefore at the very least give me the right of my lineage, which

right is that you not make a victim out of me; I do not force you to accept Islam, for example, nor do I attempt to victimize you. Likewise, it is from the right of my lineage that you not give me up unto my enemies. This is my right which you owe me’.

The meaning of the phrase ‘...other than [that you should] love your fellow men...’ (*ash-Shura*: 23) might also refer to the Prophet’s relatives and those living at home. This is because specific aspects of daily life were not permitted for the Prophet Muhammad’s relatives, since they were not like the rest of the Muslims at the time. Money, for example, which poor people other than them had a right to receive, was prohibited to them. Their right, then, was for the people to treat them with all due beneficence and fairness, and to watch over them in the Prophet’s stead.

For this reason, we find among The Hadiths of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* many injunctions to honour and tend to his family and those living at home such as the following: ‘Whoever dies for love and care of the family of the Messenger of Allah’s house dies as a martyr, having been forgiven his sins and being made alive again by the angels at his grave. He has died and gone to a grave with a door which leads to paradise. However, those who hate the house of Muhammad are cut off from Allah’s Mercy.’⁽¹⁾

They stated this because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said things to this effect: ‘Love Allah when He nourishes you with blessings. Likewise, love me with that love of Allah, and love the people of my house with that love which you have for me.’⁽²⁾ This is yet another possible

(1) *Al-Qurtubi* quotes this Hadith in his commentary of the chapter of *ash-Shura*, verse (23) in the following form: ‘He who dies for love of the family of Muhammad dies a martyr. Whosoever dies for love of the family of Muhammad, Allah causes the angels to visit his grave with mercy. And for those who die in hatred of Muhammad’s family, the Day of Judgment will find them with the phrase “Cut off from Allah’s Mercy” written between their eyes. Likewise, those who die in hatred of Muhammad’s family will not enjoy the fragrances of paradise. Those who die in hatred of my house have no final share of my intercession for them.’ *Az-Zamakshari* also quotes this Hadith in his commentary, *Al-Kashaf* (992); it is also recalled by *Al-’Albani* in his *Silsaleh Ad-Da’ifa* (4920), saying: ‘The topic is false.’

(2) *At-Tirmidhi* extracts this Hadith in his collection of sayings of Prophet Muhammad (3722); likewise, *Al-Hakim* in his supplement (4699); *At-Tabarani* in the Great Lexicon=

meaning of the phrase, '...other than [that you should] love your fellow men...' (*ash-Shura*: 23).

Yet a third meaning of '...other than [that you should] love your fellow men...' (*ash-Shura*: 23) might be that all those being addressed wished for their relatives to have their right according to lineage. Indeed, if any loving person who wishes to earn his keep were to give it to his relatives in order to provide them what is necessary to live and to help them attain a happier existence, then we would find no poor or needy people among us. This is because society is a series of interlocking communal circles, and if each of us were to provide for those needy members of our individual circle, the blessings of Allah would spread throughout all His creation.

There are other rights of possession had by relatives aside from *zakat*. If a rich man were to say that he gives of such monies to his brother, who is poor and in need, the appropriate thing for him to do would be to give his brother the clear majority, perhaps 97.5%, and to leave the other 2.5% to those poor people who are not related to him. Given this division of monies, leaving the 2.5% to give to other people aside from needy relatives, there are some who say they contribute their *zakat* funds to build schools, and others who contribute it to the building of hospitals or mosques. And by Allah, 2.5% of *zakat* offerings suffice for all these various causes. It is therefore necessary for those contributing to it, use it to maintain desirable conditions in society.

Thus, if we put *zakat* into proper usage as taught to us by the True Lord, i.e. to care for society and to protect those in need, we would not find anyone naked or hungry or sick, nor would we find heavy costs for treatment of such things. However, if we become lackadaisical about applying those principals which religious law enjoins upon us in this matter, these societal problems will continue to appear as we see them now.

Originally Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* distributed His bounty to all His creation; likewise, he engineered the societal economy in such a way that, if

= (2573, 10516); and *Al-Bayhaqi in the Studies on Faith* (437, 1368). All of them quote the Hadith from Ibn 'Abba , from the word of Yahya ibn Mu'in attributing the Hadith to Ibn 'Abbas. At-Tirmidhi states: 'This Hadith is good and remarkable, and we only know it as such.'

we properly apply His teachings on this matter, the poor person will come to live at the same socio-economic level as the rich person. Among other examples of this just division and distribution of blessings among people, we find that of a rich man in the village which has been his hometown since birth. Despite this, however, he moves to another town, where he spends his life and distributes the surplus of his wealth to the people there. We learn by this simple illustration the point that the presence of this man in his hometown provides an excess surplus to those whose lives he has been blessing for years. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* therefore causes him to go to another place where the people are in need, in order for him to bless their lives there.

If everyone at the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were doing this with their own relatives, then it makes sense that Prophet Muhammad would have charged the believers with taking care of his family, as well. He came close to doing this, because he knew that hard times would come upon those of his household, something to which history attests. We see, for example, how the Prophet's family members were scattered throughout other lands; and, moreover, how many of them were killed. In this, the love of the Egyptian people for the family of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is well known, as well as their love for Abu Bakr and 'Umar Allah *be pleased with them* there being no *Shi'a* among them.

In its most fundamental sense, love for one's fellow man means love first and foremost of Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. If this love were only given by us to those whom we wish, then it would have negative consequences: if you are mad with someone, you might overlook the fact that he is in need; if you are learned, you might not perceive the need of another for knowledge and so on. In another sense, love for one's fellow man also signifies reverence for one's parents. As noted, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* made respect for parents a sort of training grounds for increasing our faith in Allah. This is because our parents are the direct reason for our existence on earth, in similitude of Allah, who is our original Creator and therefore the higher source of our existence. Thus Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* states, '...We have enjoined on man kindness to parents...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 8). In another verse, He makes a

similar pronouncement: '...We have enjoined upon man goodness towards his parents...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 15).

Even in the case of our parents' rebelliousness in that highest of orders, that of belief in Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* and in His Oneness, He commands us to revere and respect them: '...yet should they endeavour to make thee ascribe divinity, side by side with Me, to something which thy mind cannot accept [as divine], obey them not; but [even then] bear them company in this world's life with kindness...' (*Luqman*: 15). The greater emphasis is placed upon the mother in Allah's statement '...We have enjoined on man kindness to parents...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 8). Here He mentions both, but never does he specifically stress reverence to one's father. However, there are numerous places where especial emphasis is given to respecting one's mother, such as the following verse: '...His mother bore him by bearing strain upon strain...' (*Luqman*: 14). This is because her role has its greatest effect when children are small and unaware of the work performed by their mothers; it is therefore largely absent from their conscious memories. But when children grow up, they learn for themselves the role of their father by observing him. For this reason, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* specifically mentions mothers, of whose role they are less consciously aware.

Moving on, we find the Quran making provisions for all cases of parenthood, and it therefore considers the rearing of children, even if this is performed by those other than a child's biological parents: '...And say, "O my Sustainer! Bestow Your Grace upon them, even as they cherished and reared me when I was a child!"' (*al-Isra'*: 24) Whoever raises a child at home is to be treated as that child's parent, being given all due respect and reverence.

The next clause '...for if anyone gains [the merit of] a good deed...' (*ash-Shura*: 23) signifies obedience to Allah *the Glorified Exalted*. Then we read, '...we shall grant him through it an increase of good...' (*ash-Shura*: 23). The matter therefore does not stop merely at love for one's fellow men; we must also render them those good things which they need. Finally, the verse ends with the affirmation, '...And, verily, Allah is Much-Forgiving, ever responsive to gratitude' (*ash-Shura*: 23). Here, the terms '*ghafur*' (Much-Forgiving) and 'ever responsive to gratitude' (*shakur*) are based on the

emphatic noun form (*fa`ul*) and are taken from the normal active participle forms ‘forgiving’ (*ghafir*) and ‘grateful’ (*shakir*). This form of the noun confirms that Allah’s forgiveness spreads wide and His thankfulness is much indeed; He forgives all those who come unto Him in repentance, and is grateful to all who obey Him. Whether on the side of gratitude or ingratitude on the part of His creations, there is an increase of reward or punishment, as He states elsewhere: ‘...‘But if you are ungrateful, verily, My chastisement will be severe indeed!’ (*Ibrahim*: 7)

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا فَإِنْ يَشِئِ اللَّهُ يَخْتِمْ عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ وَبِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ
الْبَطْلُ وَيُحَقِّقِ الْحَقَّ يَكَلِّمُتَهُۥ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٢٤﴾

How can they say, ‘He has invented a lie about God’? If God so willed, He could seal your heart and blot out lies: God confirms the Truth with His words. He has full knowledge of what is in the heart [24] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 24)

This verse refers to those disbelievers in Mecca, contemporary with Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who accused Prophet Muhammad of lying about the divinity of the Quran and making it up himself, then attributing it to Allah. In the phrase ‘Or do they say...’ (*ash-Shura*: 24), ‘they’ refers to these disbelievers. Then, we read, ‘He has invented about Allah a lie’ (*ash-Shura*: 24). This statement means that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brought them the Quran, and that the false attribution is on their part rather than his, since they were expert wordsmiths and composers of songs and orations. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who had lived among them, was not known by the people for having talents in this area. However, if the disbelievers were the experts in these arts of poetry and speech, why did they not bring forth something like that which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did, not even one chapter? If the false attribution were on Muhammad’s part, then the disbelievers were in the right; why, then, was it he who brought forth the Quran and not them? We read elsewhere how the Quran itself responds to these accusations with logic and fairness: ‘Do some, perchance, assert, [Muhammad] has invented this

[story]? Say, [O Prophet]: “If I have invented it, upon me be this sin; but far be it from me to commit the sin of which you are guilty.” (Hud: 35)

For this reason, the verse shifts from the context of a discussion about the disbelievers and their accusations against the Messenger of Allah, to direct address of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself: ‘...But if Allah willed, He could seal over your heart...’ (*ash-Shura*: 24). This means that, even if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had falsely attributed the Quran to Allah, having written it himself, Allah had the power to seal his heart causing the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to forget that which he had made up and written down in the Quran. However, this did not happen to Allah’s Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*; rather, the Quran continued to be published abroad in the depths of the night and in the expanse of the day, being taught unto all people.

In sum, then, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not make up the Quran himself, nor did he attribute it falsely to Allah. Indeed, it is the disbelievers who are guilty of falsely attributing the Quran to Muhammad’s capacities with language alone. In many verses, the Quran itself reveals this false attribution on the part of the disbelievers, and it responds with logic and reason. We read one verse, for example, which recounts how the disbelievers quarrel amongst each other on this matter: ‘And, indeed, full well do We know that they say, “It is but a human being that imparts [all] this to him!...”’ (*an-Nahl*: 103) In this instance, there were disbelievers who had accused Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of learning the Quran from a non-Arab person. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* responds to these claims by saying, ‘...[notwithstanding that] the tongue of him to whom they so maliciously point is wholly outlandish, whereas this is Arabic speech, clear [in itself] and clearly showing the truth [of its source].’ (*an-Nahl*: 103) This verse makes clear the illogicality of the accusations levelled against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The disbelievers stated that Muhammad sought out a non-Arab man, who taught the Quran to the Prophet. However, the Quran is written in clear, fluent Arabic, making such claims false on the face of it. If disbelievers are intent on making accusations, they might at least try to make logically coherent ones so that their spurious falsehoods are not immediately revealed.

Elsewhere, the Quran recounts another instance of this wilful stubbornness: ‘And [thus it is:] whenever Our messages are conveyed unto them in all their clarity, those who do not believe that they are destined to meet Us [are wont to] say, “Bring us a discourse other than this, or alter this one.” Say [O Prophet]: “It is not conceivable that I should alter it of my own volition; I only follow what is revealed to me. Behold, I would dread, were I [thus] to rebel against my Sustainer, the suffering [which would befall me] on that awesome Day [of Judgment]!” Say, “Had Allah willed it [otherwise], I would not have conveyed this [divine writ] unto you, nor would He have brought it to your knowledge. Indeed, a whole lifetime have I dwelt among you ere this [revelation came unto me]: will you not, then, use your reason?”’ (Yunus: 15-16) Yes, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did bring forth the Quran only after he had reached forty years of age, and he was indeed among those disbelievers the entire time before he did so. Never in his life had he shown himself to be a poet or an orator—in other words, he was not known for his abilities with language before bringing forth the Quran.

Growing desperate, the disbelievers left these preceding arguments behind and launched a new attack: it was now the fact that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself was the one who had received the Quran which posed a problem for them. ‘And they say, too, “Why was not this Quran bestowed from on high on some great man of the two cities?”’⁽¹⁾ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

Then, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* lets on to their position and makes clear their ignorance and vehement quarrelling over falsehoods. This enmity on their part is nothing more or less than stubbornness and arrogance regarding acceptance of the truth, and for this reason Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says, ‘And, lo, they would say, “O Allah! If this be indeed the truth from You, then rain down upon us stones from the skies, or inflict [some other] grievous

(1) *Qariya* is an urban centre, but one smaller than a large metropolis; it is also a place in which buildings have been erected. The meaning of the two cities is Mecca and Medina. [*Al-Qamus Al-Qawim* [112-115]]. Qatada recalls that the people were hoping for some great man not among their own, such as Al-Waid ibn Al-Mughira or ‘Arwa ibn Mas‘ud Ath-Thaqafi. From Ibn ‘Abbas, we are told that they were hoping for someone like Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira or Habib ibn ‘Amr Ath-Thaqafi. Ibn Kathir states in his *Tafsir* (124-127): ‘It is apparent that they were looking for a great man from one of the two cities, whoever that man may have been.’

suffering on us!’” (*al-Anfal*: 32) Such talk clearly embodies hatred for Muhammad the man, rather than reasoned arguments against him.

Next, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* states, ‘...For Allah blots out all falsehood, and by His words, proves the truth to be true. Verily, He has full knowledge of what is in the hearts [of men].’ (*ash-Shura*: 24) The verb *yamhu* (blots out) which normally contains the long vowel ‘u’ at the end has this vowel removed in this instance for purposes of acoustic diminution. As far as meaning is concerned, that which is blotted out is the falsehood spoken by the disbelievers, namely the accusation that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* falsely attributed the Quran to Allah; these are the things which Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* blots out. Then, in contrast, we read that ‘...[He] proves the truth to be true...’ (*ash-Shura*: 24) establishing that which is correct and strengthening it ‘...by His words...’ (*ash-Shura*: 24). In other words, through revelation to the heart of] Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the noble Quran. The phrase ‘by His words’ might also mean the command ‘be!’ since Allah is who He is, i.e. Allah.

Moving on, we read, ‘...Verily, He has full knowledge of what is in the hearts [of men].’ (*ash-Shura*: 24) This signifies that Allah is Knowledgeable of the secrets of men’s hearts, those things which the human tongue cannot express, and this fact causes him to be silent about his hidden intentions. We read about this in the following verse: ‘[for] He is aware of the [most] stealthy glance, and of all that the hearts would conceal.’ (*Ghafir*: 19)


Thus, those people continued to dispute with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to bring their hatred upon him, to resist his invitation to true religion, and to falsely accuse him. That is, until Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* revealed their falsehood and annihilated it, bringing about an end to the matter, be it with regard to true religion or their defeat or their inclusion in the forgiveness of Allah’s Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* on the day he opened Mecca to them. It was on that day that he said: ‘Do not think that I am an agent unto your cause.’ The people said, ‘That is fair, oh you kind brother, and son of a kind brother. He responded: ‘Leave, you are free to go.’⁽¹⁾

(1) *Ibn Ishaq states: ‘I have it on good narration from those in the know that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him gave a speech at the door of the Ka’ba. He=*

Thus, came the victory of Allah and the opening of the city, as He thwarted falsehood and confirmed the truth, coming out on top and prevailing amidst disbelievers. Indeed, it is illogical to think that Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* would send a messenger in order to guide His creations, only to later submit that messenger to his enemies and to forsake him as he tries to confront these half-truths.

Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah states: ‘For, long ago has Our word gone forth unto Our servants, the message-bearers, that, verily, they – they indeed – would be succoured, and that, verily, Our hosts – they indeed – would [in the end] be victorious!’ (*as-Saffat*: 171-173)

Finally, we note in the verse under consideration that the verb ‘He blots out’ is the predicate of ‘He wishes’, after the conditional ‘if’ (e.g. ‘if He wished, he would blot out...’). However, this is incorrect, since the verb ‘He blots out’ starts a new, independent clause, as indicated by the repetition of the ‘He’ of majesty, as well as the indicative verb ‘He proves’ (*yahuqqu*). As mentioned, the verb ‘blots out’ (*yamhu*) which normally contains a long ‘u’ at the end has this long vowel removed for purposes of acoustic diminution, or for the avoidance of having two consonants next to each other.


 وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَعْفُو عَنِ السَّيِّئَاتِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ

**It is He who accepts repentance from His servants and
 pardons bad deeds – He knows everything you do [25]
 (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 25)**

It is out of Allah’s kindness to His slaves and his Mercy towards them that He has established a way for them to repentance, leaving them an open door which will not shut upon them. Repentance is a hope which the sinner depends upon, and in which he finds a lifeline to pull him back so that his disposition can be improved and his behaviour made better, and so that

= said: ‘There is no god but Allah alone, and no sharer of His Oneness. Believe in His promise and in the triumph of His slave, and in the defeat of all those who fight against His Oneness.’ Then he said, ‘Do not think that I am an agent unto your cause.’ The people said, ‘This is fair, oh you kind brother, and son of a kind brother.’ He responded: ‘Leave, you are free to go.’ From the Autobiography of the Prophet by Ibn Hisham, 412-414]

society can benefit from his actions. If the door of repentance were closed to such a person, however, causing him to return back to his state of despair and continuing in a state of rebellion against Allah, both he and society would become distressed and miserable.

The word *at-tawba* (repentance) means the return of the sinner to Allah, a return which encompasses various phases. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* made repentance a spiritual law whose very legitimacy is a gift from Him to us: if a person sincerely turns back to Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* in penitence, that repentance is accepted of Him. Hence Allah's statement, '...And thereupon He turned again unto them in His Mercy, so that they might repent...' (*at-Tawba*: 118). In this verse, the expression 'He turned again unto them' means that He provided a way for them to repent, and for that repentance to be acceptable to Him.

The repentance process is not just a word or phrase we say; we cannot expect true repentance just by exclaiming, 'May I be granted forgiveness by that Great Lord who is the only true God!' Rather, repentance is a path to be trod, as is made clear to us by the words of 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* when, as he was praying, heard a man say, 'May Allah grant me forgiveness! Allah is the greatest!' 'Ali finished praying and said to the man, 'You were too quick to repent. In this, you need to repent of your repentance.'⁽¹⁾

Thus, repentance is not just a word, but rather a path and a process which begins with feelings of sorrow for those sins or evil deeds committed in the past. Regret for such actions comes upon us as the first step of repentance, as we see in the Hadith which says, 'Regret is repentance.'⁽²⁾

(1) *This Hadith is recalled by Ar-Razi in his commentary Keys to the Unseen (413-434), in his explanation of the sentence 'and it is He who accepts repentance of His servants...' (ash-Shura: 25). Jabir recounts that a man entered the mosque of Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him and said: 'O Allah, may You grant me forgiveness as I repent unto You!' Then, when 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb had finished saying prayers, he said to the man: 'O but this speed in asking His forgiveness is the repentance of liars! In this, you need to repent of your repentance.'*

(2) *This Hadith was extracted by Ibn Majah for its legitimacy (4242); Ahmad extracts it as traceable (3387, 3809, 3811, 3914); Al-Bayhaqi extracts it for its legitimacy (110-153), and Al-Hakim for its rectification (7720). Al-Bayhaqi quotes it in his Lessons on Faith (6771, 6770). All quote the Hadith from 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud.*

We also see this in the story of the sons of Adam: ‘But the other’s passion drove him to slaying his brother; and he slew him: and thus he became one of the lost.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 30) When the throes of evil and enmity had passed, he came to himself and repented of what he had done.

After feeling regret for our misdeeds, the next step is to remember those prayers which we may not have been saying and which need making up for, and we thus might engage ourselves in supererogatory prayer for this purpose. After doing this, it is necessary to provide redress to those who have been wronged, a condition whose fulfilment is absolutely essential. We add to these actions the final step of a return to doing good deeds, just as we had first fallen into doing bad deeds; it is necessary to once again taste the bitterness of the duty of obedience, just as we once tasted the saccharine nectar of rebellious behaviour.

Regarding the language of this verse, normal usage would call for the phrase: He accepts repentance, but here the True Lord says, ‘of His servants...’ (*ash-Shura*: 25). It is as if the True Lord keeps off their sins when He accepts their repentance. The result of this is the forgiveness of those sins which they have committed. However, the sins they have committed call for many of Allah’s attributes. These attributes are concerned with such sins and should be operationalized.

When one of His servants commits a sin, it calls for such attributes. Take, for example, His attributes *Al-Qahhar* (the Compeller), *Al-Jabbar* (the Conqueror) and *Al-Muntaqim* (the Avenger) indicate His Stern Majesty as well as imply punishment. There are other qualities that manifest His Beauty, such as *Al-Ghafur* (the All-Forgiving), *Ar-Rahim* (the Compassionate) and *At-Tawwab* (the Granter and Acceptor of repentance), and so on. For this reason, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* states in a Hadith about the last days of *Ramadan*: ‘The angels have interceded, the apostles have interceded and the believers have interceded, and no one remains (to grant pardon) but the Most Merciful of the merciful.’⁽¹⁾

(1) *Muslim extracts this Hadith for its correctness (269), and Ahmad extracts it as traceable (11463). Both quote it from Abu Sa’id Al-Khudri, who states that Allah said: ‘The angels intervened, as did the prophets and the believers, and only The Most Merciful remained. And so, He snatched up a handful of hellfire to extract from it a people who had never done good deeds. They returned as ash, and so He placed them in the river at the mouth of paradise.’ This is the Hadith in its entirety.*

If the believers, the prophets and the angels will all intercede on the part of those who commit sin, leaving only the intercession of the Most Merciful of the merciful, to whom does He intercede on their behalf? The answer is that He Himself is the source of their punishment and their forgiveness, since He possesses the attributes of Majesty and the attributes of Beauty. If the attributes of stern majesty start to lay hold on the rebellious sinner, the attributes of beauty come to plead his case before the cause of justice contained in Allah's qualities of sternness and exacting judgment. Thus, the statement 'It is He who accepts repentance of His servants...' (*ash-Shura*: 25) employs the word 'of' even though the repentance is really from them. In this instance, 'of' is used because Allah *Glorified is He* bears away their sins of them. We find such precise, meaningful use of words like this throughout the Noble Quran, with meaning which is given to certain words in a specific context. For example, we read in the following verse: '...I shall certainly cut off your alternate hands and feet, then crucify you on the trunks of palm trees.'... (*Ta Ha*: 71).

From this we understand that crucifixion binding someone to a tree. That is why some commentators said that it means `ala (on) trucks of palm trees. Why then does the Quran employs the word *fi* (in) instead of `ala (on) indicating that there is another meaning which `ala (on) would not suffice to give. We can thus infer that the meaning is: I shall most certainly crucify you harshly and severely, such that the parts of the body of the crucified will be impressed into the trunk on which he is crucified. For this reason, the verse states: '...in the trunks of palm trees....' (*Ta Ha*: 71).

Likewise, in the following statement by Allah *the Exalted*: 'Praise be to Allah, who has granted me Ishmael and Isaac on my old age...' (*Ibrahim*: 39), some commentators note that the meaning here is *ma`a* (with, but here: despite) old age. However, the verse instead uses the `ala (on) old age. In this case, there is yet again a second, deeper meaning which justifies the use of `ala (on), a word which is useful for expressing things as being on a loftier level. In this instance, old age was preventing the bearing of children. However, the will and power of Allah *Glorified is He* superseded that barrier, showing that He exists on a higher level. Likewise, in the verse: '...your Lord is full of forgiveness for people, despite their wrongdoing...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 6), Allah says: `ala *zhulmihim* (despite their wrongdoing). `Ala, literally means (on). The rebelliousness referred

to in this instance was deserving of punishment. Yet, Allah's Forgiveness and Mercy unto His slaves is higher and loftier than His punishment.

Moving on, we read that He: 'pardons bad deeds' (*ash-Shura*: 25), i.e. Allah blots them out. Then, He says: '...He knows everything you do.' (*ash-Shura*: 25) This is so because Allah's Knowledge is all encompassing and all-inclusive, which not even a speck of dust escapes it, whether in heaven or on the earth. Thus, if a person were to commit a sin which no other person knew about, Allah *Glorified is He* would still know, and it is necessary that we repent of it to Him. Even if the sin were only in one's mind and not manifest as an action, it would still require repentance.

Then, the True Lord says:

وَيَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَيَزِيدُهُمْ
مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ؕ وَالْكَافِرُونَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

**He responds to those who believe and do good
deeds, and gives them more of His bounty;
agonizing torment awaits the disbelievers [26]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 26)**

In other words, Allah *Glorified is He* responds to all those who believe in Him and who do good deeds. The verb *yastajeeb*, (responds) indicates the swiftness of the response; hence why He did not *yujeeb*. He says: '...and gives them more of His bounty' (*ash-Shura*: 26) which indicates that Allah is the One Who responds to the believers. By contrast, '...agonizing torment awaits the disbelievers.' (*ash-Shura*: 26) The agonizing torment referred to here comes eventually because they will, first, be faced with Allah's Wrath, then they will be debarred from their Lord, then they will be cursed and cast away from His Mercy and finally, they will have the agonizing torment.

Then, the True Lord says⁽¹⁾:

(1) *The context of the revelation of this verse is that it came forth among a people in Saffa who were possessed of great riches and the things of this world. Khabab ibn Al-Art states: 'This verse was revealed unto us, and this, because we recklessly sought after gold and the riches of our panegyrics. Thus, Allah sent this verse down to us.' The Contexts of Revelation by Al-Wahidi Al-Nisaburi, p. 213; Al-Maktaba Ath-Thiqafiyya, Beirut*

وَلَوْ بَسَطَ اللَّهُ الرِّزْقَ لِعِبَادِهِ لَبَغَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَكِنْ
يُنْزِلُ بِقَدَرٍ مَّا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٧﴾

If God were to grant His plentiful provision to [all] His creatures, they would act insolently on earth, but He sends down in due measure whatever He will, for He is well aware of His servants and watchful over them [27]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 27)

This verse states a quality of the human soul, as Allah *Glorified is He* states elsewhere in the Quran: 'But man exceeds all bounds, when he thinks he is self-sufficient.' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7) This is because, when provision is extended and made easy for man, his will not be concerned with obtaining or pursuing it, nor will he exert effort. Instead, He will have time to occupy himself with other matters, such as acting insolently.

For this reason, when the Quran discusses Qarun (Korah), the clearest example of an insolent wealthy man, Allah *Glorified is He* states: 'Qarun was one of Musa's (Moses's) people, but he oppressed them...' (*al-Qasas*: 76). Thus, affluence and wealth might lead a person to be insolent and oppressive for no just reason. So, in this context, 'plentiful provision' means extending it and facilitating the means of obtaining it. In this sense, it is a sort of trial or test.

Moving on, we read: '...but He sends down in due measure whatever He will, for He is well aware of His servants and watchful over them.' (*ash-Shura*: 27) This statement means that Allah *Glorified is He* affords provision in a specific amount and measure, in accordance with His Knowledge and Wisdom in arranging the affairs of His creation. He thus gives them provision according to their needs, such that His servants reach the extent of tyranny and wrongness. Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* knows best the nature of His servants, and He is aware of that which leads them to righteousness, hence the following statement from the Hadith: 'Indeed, there are among my servants those who, if I made them rich, would become corrupt; and there are those among them who, if I made them poor, would become righteous.'⁽¹⁾

(1) Al-Albany quotes this Hadith in *Al Silsilah Ad-Da'ifah* (254-256) stating: 'Al-Bayhaqi extracts this Hadith (for its correctness) (in *Al'Asma' Wa As- Siffat*, p. 121, Egypt); Al-Baghwi=

Islam has been concerned with the economic aspect in sustaining life. Therefore, it makes incumbent upon us the payment of *zakat*, in order for benefit to be distributed in society. We have learned previously to distinguish between the poor person who is truly in need and cannot work, and he who is skilled in deceiving others into thinking that he is needy. The latter will not have a share of people's money, and it is not meet for us to aid them in their idleness and inaction.

However, as for the helpless, they deserve our charitable offerings, since he is unable to make a living himself. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* assigns such a person a portion from that money possessed by those capable of making a living; a portion that he receives in dignity, without losing face in order to obtain provision. Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* preserves dignity unto such truly helpless people. Moreover, He brings those wealthier individuals, capable of making a living, to their very doors to give them their share; such that the helpless know that, even as Allah *Glorified is He* took away their ability to work, He subjugated the strength and ability of others to them.

Likewise, with the injunction to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca, we see people feel sad for they are truly unable to fulfil this command, when in reality such people are more blessed by Allah than those who are capable of performing the pilgrimage. This is because the latter might perform the pilgrimage, yet Allah does not accept it; whereas, fundamentally, performing the pilgrimage is not obligatory on those incapable of performing it. It is said that ninety percent of people have never seen the Holy Mosque in Mecca. However, does this mean that Allah *Glorified is He* prohibits them from ever seeing it simply because they do not have the material means to go? No! In fact, they are apportioned a vision of it: 'There are those who circumambulate around the *Ka'ba*, and there are those around whom the *Ka'ba* circumambulates.'⁽¹⁾

= extracts it in his *Explication of the Sunna* (141-142); and Abu Bakr Al-Kalabadhi in his (*Keys to the Meanings*) (190).' He also states that the attribution of this Hadith is very weak, and quotes the beginning of the Hadith as follows: 'Whosoever purports to be my friend and condemns me, the same has come up unto me as if in battle.'

(1) Here we might pause over a line of a poem from `Abd Al-Qadir Al-Jilani (d. 561 AH/ 1166 AD):

Every important religious person circumambulates the *Ka'ba* seven times;
As for me, the temple circumambulates around my tent."

Thereafter, we see that the state of poverty or helplessness does not continue forever because people's fortunes alternate, as Allah *Glorified is He* states: '...Such days (of varying fortunes) We give to men and men by turns.' (*Al-Imran*: 140) It was previously clarified that there is wisdom in the existence of poverty in society, since it is impossible for the mobility of that society and the needs of people to be based purely on benefaction. Rather, they are based on necessity. When material needs are lacking, we work and do not shrink from hard or despicable duties; otherwise, who would do such things for us?

An illustrative example—and one which we have seen previously—is that of the labourer who accepts the fate Allah chose for him and performs his work devotedly. Accordingly, Allah *Glorified is He* says to him: 'You have accepted my destiny (done your best according to that measure which I have given you); I will now give you blessings in accordance with My Worth.' Before long, such labourer will not be an employee; rather he will become employer or even an owner of a business, even though he was once a wage earner. This is because he was sincere and truthful with his employer and did not envy him, nor was he ungrateful for his pay (which was actually a blessing).

In all, The True Lord does not withhold provision nor sends it down in due measure except in cases of possible danger or harm. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* grants limited provision to those whom He knows would be made corrupt by overabundance of wealth in order to purify them through poverty. This is because, at root, Allah *Glorified is He* is generous and magnanimous and extends provision for His servants. For this reason, He states in the next verse:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُنْزِلُ الْغَيْثَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوا وَيَنْشُرُ
رَحْمَتَهُ ۖ وَهُوَ الْوَلِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ﴿٢٨﴾

**It is He who sends relief through rain after they
have lost hope, and spreads His mercy far and wide.
He is the Protector, Worthy of All Praise [28]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 28)**

The phrase 'relief through rain' (*ash-Shura*: 28) means rain which falls on earth after a drought providing water to people and saving them from

parched fields, hunger and famine which had previously beset them. The phrase ‘...after they have lost hope...’ (*ash-Shura*: 28) means that they had lost hope in the return of rainfall.

Next, He says, ‘...and spreads His Mercy far and wide...’ (*ash-Shura*: 28) meaning, He bestows sustenance mercifully upon all His slaves. His words: ‘...He is the Protector...’ (*ash-Shura*: 28) means the One in Whom His servants confide with regard to all their affairs and their benefactor. The final statement that Allah *Glorified is He* is ‘...Worthy of All Praise’ (*ash-Shura*: 28) means that He is to be honoured for those blessings which He has granted people bestowed upon them since Allah *Glorified is He* had blessed people even before they existed since He created the heavens, the earth and indeed the entire universe, subjugating it for their benefit and service. People have therefore been placed in a universe ready and prepared to receive them, and in which are found all things requisite for preserving their lives.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا
 مِنْ دَابَّةٍ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ جَمْعِهِمْ إِذَا يَشَاءُ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

**Among His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth and
 all the living creatures He has scattered throughout them:
 He has the power to gather them all together whenever
 He will [29] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 29)**

The phrase ‘His signs’ (*ash-Shura*: 29) the singular of which is *aya* (sign), referring to something miraculous which causes a person to wonder or ponder. We might also say: ‘this person is an *aya* (a prodigy) when it comes to good manners or acquiring knowledge’. Further, as noted, the *ayat* (signs) which are described in the noble Quran are of three types: the first are natural signs which are evidence of His ability and the wondrousness of His creative power. These signs include phenomena such as the sun, the moon, the night, and daylight. The second category includes those miraculous signs which prove the truthfulness of Allah’s messengers, in terms of their claims about Allah *Glorified is He*. Finally, there are those *ayat* (verses) which include specific dictates or pronouncements about religion; these are the verses of the noble Quran.

In the verse under consideration, the True Lord speaks about some of His natural signs: 'Among His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth...' (*ash-Shura*: 29). The heaven and the earth are both astonishing in their nature, and are proofs of the absoluteness of Allah's Power, as well as His Wisdom. Elsewhere in the Quran, He states: '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)

Certainly, the creation of heaven and the earth is greater than the creation of man, since man comes to life by being born then dies. They perish as small children or as youth or even while still in their mother's wombs. Even if a person lives for one hundred years, he will eventually die. So then, who is man alongside Allah who created the heavens and the earth and those natural signs found therein, signs which last as long as Allah *Glorified is He* wishes?

It is important for man to remember these truths, and to ask himself: can it be that these signs are older than man is when they were created and subjugated for his benefit? Then, there must be another term of existence which is more befitting to man's station, and by which Allah *Glorified is He* has privileges him above these signs. We may thus say that we have another, more eternal and permanent life through we will exist and survive eternally when all these signs or other creations in the heaven and the earth perish.

The statement '...the heavens and earth...' (*ash-Shura*: 29) means those things found therein, since the heavens and the earth are enveloped vessels containing countless creations. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* states elsewhere: 'To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth...' (*al-Baqara*: 284).

Moving on, we read the words: '...and all the living creatures He has scattered...' (*ash-Shura*: 29) meaning He spread 'all the living creatures' (*ash-Shura*: 29) throughout the heavens and the earth. *Daabah* (living creatures) is the noun and *yadubbu* on the earth is the verb which means: that which crawls on earth, referring to all humans and animals which walk upon its surface. As for *yadubb* in the heavens, it refers to the angels that live in them.

Next, we read: '...He has the power to gather them all together whenever He wills.' (*ash-Shura*: 29) This sentence refers to the Day of Judgment. The

statement ‘He has the power’ (*ash-Shura*: 29) means that He is capable of gathering them, as made clear elsewhere: ‘...the Day of Gathering, of which there is no doubt...’ (*ash-Shura*: 7).

Some scholars have gone so far as to assert the presence of other creations in the highest heights, being just as responsible as we are, and have obligations just like us. In our solar system, for example, there are other planets aside from earth such as Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and others. His greatness is manifested in gathering all these creatures.

Then, the true lord says:

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِّنْ مُّصِيبَةٍ فِيمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُوا عَنْ كَثِيرٍ ﴿٣٠﴾

Whatever misfortune befalls you [people], it is because of what your own hands have done – God forgives much [30]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 30)

The word *asaba* (befell) is taken from the idea of an arrow hitting a target. If an archer is skilled, he will hit the target without the arrow deviating from it in the slightest. In this verse, then, the calamities which beset people in this world are as if they were arrows that have already been shot toward us, which undoubtedly wound or befall those for whom they are intended. For this reason, it is said that a calamity does not begin the moment it befalls someone, but rather, it is predestined, an arrow that have already been shot, whose time is that period taken to travel the distance to the targeted person, as noted previously with regard to the calamity of death.

Thus, the issue of misfortunes sent our way is certain, written, recorded, predestined for and not a sudden accident. Indeed, the entire universe has a recorded mock-up in which all details are clarified. For this reason, Allah *the Exalted* states: ‘No misfortune can happen, either in the earth or in yourselves, that was not set down in writing before We brought it into being. That is easy for Allah.’ (*al-Hadid*: 22) In other words: there is no escaping or fleeing from those misfortunes which have already been determined for us; nor can we forestall such tragedies which are like an arrow that has already been shot and cannot be returned.

There are two types of misfortunes which befall humankind. The first is the type of problem or crisis which we have some measure of control or influence over; the second type is that over which we have no such control. For example, if a student fails his final exam because he has neglected his studies and did not make the necessary effort to study the material during the semester, then it is the sort of crisis which could have been avoided and over which the student has control. If we all wish to prevent this type of misfortune, we should do that which is necessary to succeed and set aside those things which cause us to fail. If we do this, then we will surely find success.

The other type of misfortune or crisis is that which we cannot prevent or control. Returning to the example of the student, this second type of misfortune would come about if the student works hard and memorizes his lessons, only to get dizzy or sick on the day of the exam, which he is thus unable to finish properly. This happens according to Allah's will, and therefore there must certainly be some wisdom therein. For this reason, we must be content when such a misfortune befalls us knowing that it is Allah's wish for it to happen. This knowledge makes such a misfortune easier to deal with when we know that it comes from Allah *Glorified is He* and no one else.

It was mentioned previously that examples from reality might help us understand this concept better. Suppose that a father is sitting in his house, and his son walks in with bruises on his face. The first question from the father would of course be, 'Who did this to you'? In this he is wise, for he does not judge the matter until after discovering who the doer of the deed is; for an incident cannot be pleasing or distressing until the doer of the action is known.

If the son says that it was Uncle So-and-So who hit him, the father would respond that the son probably did something to deserve the punishment that he got, since that uncle is a trusted, loving figure in the family. If, however, the son says that it was So-and-So from next door, the father would get extremely upset at the neighbour who did this terrible thing to his son.

We see from this example that, when something unpleasant is done to us by someone we love and trust, that we know there must be some benefit, and we therefore accept it. If, however, such an unpleasant deed is done to us by an enemy, then we fight against it, knowing that there is no benefit there from it.

The True Lord wants to teach us how to receive misfortunes, and to learn that each comes to us for a reason. If we understand that reason, then we know why the misfortune has happened, making it easier to accept. If we do not know the reason, then we accept it and say to ourselves that Allah *Glorified is He* must have some wise purpose for sending such misfortunes upon us. In this way, we pass through the door of contentment and submission, rather than discontent and objection.

So then, the student who gets sick and cannot complete his final test says to himself, ‘Perhaps I was envious, and Allah wanted to chastise me for that. Or perhaps I would have gotten a worse grade than that for which I was hoping. Or perhaps Allah was defending me against the evil eye of envy’.

Did the True Lord not say regarding Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, ‘The disbelievers almost strike you down with their looks’ (*al-Qalam*: 51). There is another instance, found in the chapter of *al-Kahf* in which the True Lord gives us an example for how to receive unpleasant incidents and accept misfortunes; as long as we have can never stop them, there must be some divine wisdom in our having to go through them. This idea appears in the story of the Righteous Servant⁽¹⁾ and Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*: for even though the righteous servant was not a prophet per se, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* who was a prophet, nevertheless learned from him and asked to accompany him in his journey. Through this example, we learn that, when a servant of Allah *Glorified is He* rises in his relationship with his Lord, Allah *Glorified is He* opens insights and breakthroughs to that servant, and grants him knowledge intended especially for him.

The righteous servant worshipped Allah *Glorified is He* according to that path delineated by Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and yet, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* followed the righteous servant in order to learn from him. This is because the mission of a messenger is to bring to Allah *Glorified is He*

(1) The righteous servant is Al-Khidr *peace be upon him* of whom numerous stories, tales and legends have been handed down, many of which attest that he was an actual historical figure, although there is no conclusive evidence of this. The most evident fact is that he is a prophet in Allah’s statement, ‘And I did not do [any of] this of my own accord’ (*al-Kahf*: 82). The only correct facts known about him are those recounted in the Quran.

those to whom the messenger has been sent. If that messenger does not do this, then he leaves behind those whom he is supposed to help, letting them try to find Allah *Glorified is He* themselves. Moreover, every messenger has his own adeptness in refining his relationship with Allah *the Exalted*. In this way, The righteous servant had grown closer to Allah *Glorified is He* and become intimate with Him, and accordingly Allah granted him special knowledge.

Let us now consider what Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* says to The Righteous Servant: ‘Musa (Moses) said to him, “May I follow you so that you can teach me some of the right guidance you have been taught?”’ The man said, “You will not be able to bear with me patiently.”’ (*al-Kahf*: 66-67)

This response from the righteous servant means that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* will soon behold events that he will not like or will he be able to infer the wisdom behind them. ‘...“How could you be patient in matters beyond your knowledge?” Musa (Moses) said, “Allah willing, you will find me patient. I will not disobey you in any way.” The man said, “If you follow me then, do not query anything I do before I mention it to you myself.”’ (*al-Kahf*: 68-70)

After this, their journey begins, with Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* accompanying the righteous servant. The first incident which occurs as they travel is that of the boat: ‘They travelled on. Later, when they got into a boat, and the man made a hole in it, Musa (Moses) said, “How could you make a hole in it? Do you want to drown its passengers? What a strange thing to do!”’ (*al-Kahf*: 71)

This is Musa’s (Moses’s) first protest against the righteous servant’s actions, which appear to be strange and deserving of outcry, ‘He replied, “Did I not tell you that you would never be able to bear with me patiently?” Musa (Moses) said, “Forgive me for forgetting. Do not make it too hard for me to follow you.” And so they travelled on. Then, when they met a young boy and the man killed him, Musa (Moses) said, “How could you kill an innocent person? He has not killed anyone! What a terrible thing to do!”’ (*al-Kahf*: 72-74) *Nukra* means terrible and deplorable.

Indeed, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was unable to be patient with him, looking on at this odd and reprehensible behaviour. ‘He replied, “Did I not

tell you that you would never be able to bear with me patiently?” Musa (Moses) said, “From now on, if I query anything you do, banish me from your company—you have put up with enough from me.” And so they travelled on. Then, when they came to a town and asked the inhabitants for food but were refused hospitality, they saw a wall there that was on the point of falling down and the man repaired it. Musa (Moses) said, “But if you had wished you could have taken payment for doing that.” (al-Kahf: 75-77)

This is the third incident which occurs, and with that, the condition which Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had sworn unto himself materialized. So, the righteous servant decides to depart from Musa (Moses). However, before doing so, he told Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to come listen to him as he clarified that which Musa’s (Moses’s) patience was unable to bear: ‘He said, “This is where you and I part company. I will tell you the meaning of the things you could not bear with patiently: the boat belonged to some needy people who made their living from the sea and I damaged it because I knew that coming after them was a king who was seizing every [serviceable] boat by force.’ (al-Kahf: 78-79) In other words, the king takes every usable boat for himself.

There is no doubt that the damage done to this boat by the righteous servant seems to be a catastrophe for the boat’s owners. However, there is wisdom in the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* permits this, since there is an oppressive king coming after the poor owners of the boat, taking all good boats and appropriating them unto himself. For this reason, the righteous servant desired to destroy the boat, so that the king could not steal it.

In this case, we do not compare the costs and benefits of having a good, usable boat and one which has been damaged. Rather, the choice is between a damaged boat and not having a boat at all: the damaging of the boat makes life easier for its owners, since they at least have the boat, which they can fix later, rather than having the whole thing taken from them by the king.

Next, we read: ‘the young boy had parents who were people of faith, and so, fearing he would trouble them through wickedness and disbelief, we wished that their Lord should give them another child—purer and more compassionate—in his place.’ (al-Kahf: 80-81) Allah *the Exalted* knows that the young man would have become disobedient, creating strife for his parents,

as Allah *Glorified is He* states: 'Believers, even among your spouses and your children you have some enemies—beware of them...' (*at-Taghabun*: 14). There is thus wisdom in killing him.

One might reasonably ask what the boy's crime was, such that his death at such a young age was warranted. The answer is that he was guilty of no such crime. However, the boy died in a stage of life where he had not tasted of the evils of this life, nor had he been saddled with responsibilities or held accountable for his good and bad deeds.

Being a young boy, his life was cut short. He was thus spared the chance of committing sins in this life, and died before reaching the age of being responsible of performing religious duties and held accountable for his deeds. Thus, his reward is that which is reserved for martyrs; his abode will be in paradise where he may stroll wherever he pleases and enter any place he desires. He may even enter unto the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. He becomes among the roamers of paradise. Thus, the boy's death represents a form of mercy upon him.

Continuing with the story, we read: 'The wall belonged to two young orphans in the town and there was buried treasure beneath it belonging to them. Their father had been a righteous man, so your Lord intended them to reach maturity and then dig up their treasure as a mercy from your Lord. I did not do [these things] of my own accord: these are the explanations for those things you could not bear with patience.' (*al-Kahf*: 82)

First, regarding this part of the story, we know that there were found in this town depraved people in whom was found not one shred of goodness, as evinced by the fact that they withheld food from Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and the righteous servant. This indicates vileness and baseness, to be sure, since those who ask for food are unlike people who ask for money, which might be hoarded. Food spoils after time, however, and therefore those who ask for food cannot but ask out of a real and immediate need.

It is thus reasonable to believe the plea of those who beg for food. For this reason, it is a marvellous thing that the righteous servant rebuilt wall after they had refused him food. Why did he rebuild the wall? The wall belonged

to two orphaned boys in that same town. He did this thanks to his ability to see through the wicked masses of the town and to perceive the plight of the two orphans, for what would have happened if news about the boys' treasure reached such people?

We learn from this situation that the righteousness of fathers is beneficial to their sons. We also understand the two young boys to be twins, as evinced by Allah's statement '...so your Lord intended them to reach maturity...' (*al-Kahf*: 82). If one had been older than the other, then he would have taken the treasure unto himself. The righteous servant built the wall in such a way that it was timed to stand only until the two boys had come of age (which would presumably be the same time since they were twins), after which it would crumble, revealing the treasure and allowing for the two boys to protect it against the ignoble people of the village. In this way, the building of the wall was also a form of punishment for those reprehensible misers and a chastisement for their stinginess since it prevented them from taking the riches of the treasure for themselves.

Finally, the righteous servant did not neglect to clarify to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* that those actions which he performed were not of his own accord, but rather by command of Allah *Glorified is He*: '...I did not do [these things] of my own accord...' (*al-Kahf*: 82). In sum, whenever an inescapable trial or hardship is placed before us, we must look for the wisdom to be found in going through that trial since it must necessarily contain some lesson to be learned which the hardship will lead us to discover.

In the verse at hand, we read: 'Whatever misfortune befalls you [people], it is because of what your own hands have done...' (*ash-Shura*: 30). This statement is addressed to all people generally, including both believers and disbelievers. It is addressed to disbelievers who perhaps entered a battle and lost, had their money stolen, or were killed for their disbelief, and to believers who might have committed transgressions or sins which admit of punishment or reprimand, such as adultery or consumption of alcohol.

The True Lord revealed unto His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* that he should inform his *ummah* (people) and teach them how to handle trials such as these, hence the Hadith: 'No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor

sadness, nor hurt nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that.'⁽¹⁾

A knowledgeable man said: 'I do not know my status regarding my lord, from the temperament of my mount' meaning that when his riding animal is recalcitrant or stumbles along, he asks himself what he did to deserve to have his animal act stubbornly. 'Asma',⁽²⁾ daughter of Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* would suffer from chronic headaches, and she would put her hands to her head and say, 'It is the result of my sins, and surely Allah forgives much.'

By way of clarification, we had previously said that the True Lord created man and appointed him a purpose in this life. It is clear that man has a way which protects him and through which he can properly direct his life; and set for him the right way that regulates his way of life. If man deviates from that right way, this results in disorder. It is like machines produced by people and arranged into a catalogue outlining their proper care and usage: if one were to try to use these devices in a way which goes against such information, the machine would crash.

The True Lord wishes for us to be aware of this, in order to reassure the believer when trials beset him, such that he might be patient and not grow anxious or upset. It is at times like these that the believer can be assured of the wisdom of such hardships, looking inside himself and asking what he might have done to bring upon himself such catastrophe, since it must have come in order to cleanse him of some filth or transgression which he has committed.

This, then, is how self-aware believers handle crises and trials: they turn inward and hold themselves accountable, since they have learned the lesson, taught by Allah *Glorified is He* that this world is one reserved to work for our

(1) *Al-Bukhari extracts this Hadith for its correctness (5210); Ahmad cites it as being attributable (7684, 8070, 10714, 11024), quoting from Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him.*

(2) 'Asma', daughter of Abu Bakr, born in the year 27 B.H. Her mother was Qatila, daughter of 'Abd Al-'Azzi. She converted to Islam in Mecca after long acquaintance with the religion, and her conversion came after that of seventeen other individuals, when she was fifteen years of age. She had a major role in the pilgrimage to Medina, and she was known as 'She Who Has Two Girdles'. She married Zubair ibn Al-'Awwam, and recounted 58 Hadiths cited from the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him. She died in the year 73 A.H. after pilgrims killed her son 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr.

reward and not to receive that reward, which comes in the Hereafter: ‘Today each soul will be rewarded for whatever it has done...’ (*Ghafir*: 17). Thus, those hardships and trials which befall us in this world are not for our recompense. Rather, they are opportunities for us to be righteous, and to learn that violating Allah’s rulings must surely lead to punishment.

We are aware of calamities that befall all kinds of people, including our friends as well as irreligious people, and even prophets; hence the Hadith of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘Those beset most fiercely by trial are the prophets, followed by the saints followed by the most exemplary of believers.’⁽¹⁾

Those trials which come upon the prophets are not punishments for transgressions which they have committed, but rather, trials that test their commitment to Allah’s Commands. Prophet’s conduct during such times is meant to be an example for their people. In this way, these peoples can learn to be righteous and patient. Thus, when calamities befall us, we remember those calamities that befell the prophets *peace be upon them* and how they received them with patience, and consequently follow their example, correct our behaviour and be closer to Allah *Glorified is He*.

Then, we read the statement ‘...Allah forgives much.’ (*ash-Shura*: 30) This refers to the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* forgives many of our sins and transgressions; if it were not for Allah’s forgiveness and mercy bestowed upon His creations, no one would be saved.

That is why we say to one who is afflicted with misfortunes, ‘Allah willing, there is an atonement’ meaning Allah *Glorified is He* has made recompense for your transgressions. We read in a Qudsi Hadith: ‘By my Might and my Majesty I do not cause my servant to leave this world having intended for him any good, until I repay him for the evils he committed in this life by means of illness in his body, loss of his wealth, or death of his child. And if (even after these sanctifying trials) there remains unto him any unpunished evil deed, I

(1) *Ahmad extracts this Hadith as being attributable (171-172), and At-Tirmidhi extracts it for its habitual grouping with other Hadiths (2398), as well as Ibn Majah (4023), from a Hadith recounted by Sa’ad ibn Abu Waqqas. At-Tirmidhi states, ‘This is a correct and proper Hadith. It states in its entirety: ‘A man is beset by trials according to his faithfulness. Hardships will continue to befall him until he walks sinless upon the earth.’*

will heap upon him the agonies of death to the point (where he returns to the innocent state, purified of sin) in which his mother bore him. By my Might and Majesty, I do not cause my servant to go out of this world having intended for him any evil, until I repay him for the good deeds he committed in this life by means of (blessings as) health in his body, abundance of his riches, and safety of his children, until on the Day of Judgment, I do not owe him any reward for any good deed; for as I said: "We will not allow to be lost the reward of any who did well in deeds."⁽¹⁾ Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* pours out blessings upon such a one in this worldly life since he has no share or portion in the Hereafter.

Then, the True Lord says:

وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿٣١﴾

**You cannot escape Him anywhere on earth: you
have no protector or helper other than God [31]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 31)**

In this verse, the True Lord addresses those who opposed the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* resisted his call to true religion and argued with him. Here, the Lord states that they will not be exempt from His Justice, and that those who escape punishment in this world will surely have their just reward in the Hereafter, as the Lord says addressing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: '...whether We show you part of what We have promised them in this life or whether We take your soul back to Us first, it is to Us that they will be returned.' (*Ghafir*: 77)

In the verse under consideration, the Lord states: 'You cannot escape Him anywhere on Earth...' (*ash-Shura*: 31). *Mu`jiz* means that which describes me as being constantly unable. *Yu`jizuni* means that which makes something that

(1) *Al-Albany rates this Hadith in his Da`if At-Tarhib Wa At-Tarhib quoting from Anas, who quotes the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him as saying: 'The Lord says, I cause no one to leave this world, while at the same time desiring to forgive that person his sins in order that I might recompense his every sin on his conscience, through bodily illness and drying up of wealth.' Razin recounts this Hadith, and Al-Mundhari claims to have never heard it. Al-'Albany does not mention the degree of its weak attribution.*

I am incapable of doing. In this context, the True Lord says to the people that they are incapable of escaping Him; for wherever they go, He will find them.

We see the wisdom of the jinn regarding this point such as when they stated: ‘We know we can never frustrate Allah on Earth; we can never escape Him.’ (*al-Jinn*: 12). Indeed, the jinn are more capable of fleeing than humans. Despite this, they still recognize that they would be unable to escape or hide from Allah *Glorified is He*.

For this reason, Allah’s Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* praised those jinn who were counted as believers as he recited the chapter of *ar-Rahman* to some of the Companions. He *peace and blessings be upon him* said to them: ‘I recited this surah to the jinn, who understood it better than you did. Indeed, every time they heard the statement: “which, then, of your Lord's blessings do you both deny?” (*ar-Rahman*: 13), they would say, “There is nothing from Your Grace which we can deny, O Lord, and unto You is all praise due.”’⁽¹⁾

The True Lord grants the oppressor respite and gives him time, but when He seizes him, He will not then let him escape. The fact that Allah *Glorified is He* grants respite to such people does not mean He is incapable of seizing them since he is Mighty and possesses absolute power. He brings such people when he pleases. By contrast, a weak person takes advantage of the first opportunity to take vengeance since he knows that such an opportunity might not return, as the poet⁽²⁾ said:

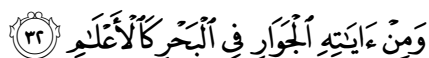
When a weak one is given the opportunity,
She kills; such is the capacity of the weak.⁽³⁾

(1) *As-Suyuti cites this in Ad-Dur Al-Manthur (690-697); At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Al-Mandhar and Sheikh Al-Asfahani attribute the Hadith in Al-'Uzma Wa 'Al-Akim); and Ibn Mardwayh and Al-Bayhaqi cite it in Dala'il An-Nubuwwa), quoting from Jabir ibn 'Abdullah.*

(2) Abu Tammam, Habib ibn 'Aus At-Ta'i, one of the princes of poetic eloquence... He was born in *Jasim*, in the village of Huran, Syria, in the year 803 A.D./188 A.H. His poetry exhibits much aesthetic power and purity of style, and he composed several literary works among which are *Fuhul Ash-Shu'ara'* and the *Amasa* collection of poetry. He went down to Egypt, from whence he was summoned to Baghdad by Al-Mu'tasim; he later acted as supervisor of the postal system in Mosul. However, not two years passed before he died at Mosul in the year 845 A.D./ 231 A.H. at age 44.

(3) This line is from a poem by Abu Tammam, written in the *Bahr (meter) Al-Kamil* and comprising 30 total lines.

Then, we read Allah's statement '...you have no protector or helper other than Allah.' (*ash-Shura: 31*) *Al-Waliyy* means a trusted relative or a close friend who is always near to you, and who is supposed to deflect trials or disasters from you before they occur. *An-Nasir* means the one who provides succour and aid when hardships beset you. By using these words, the True Lord teaches us to stick to the straight path of obeying His commands, and to have a direct connection to Him. Moreover, He teaches us that we should not think that we can escape Him, or that anyone of his creation can protect us and give us succour to achieve this. Then, the True Lord says:



Among His signs are the ships, sailing like floating mountains [32] (The Quran, *ash-Shura: 32*)

The phrase 'the ships, sailing' refers to ships, i.e. those vessels that run along the surface of the water. In our own modern day, we see immense, colossal ships with massive tonnage which are carried along by the Grace of Allah *Glorified is He* across the waters. Likewise, we find freight cars and trucks of mighty weight which are carried along above the ground on wheels filled with air. The fact that light things carry heavy things is a one of Allah's miracles and signs.

In His words 'like floating mountains' (*ash-Shura: 32*), *Al-A`laam* which is the plural form of *`alam* means: a mountain. It is called *`alam* due to its height and being visible; hence the following line from Al-Khansa⁽¹⁾, in lament for her brother, Sakhr:

He was like a mountain topped with fire.⁽²⁾

(1) *Al-Khansa`*, or *Tumadir bint `Omru ibn Al-Harith*), of the *Bani Sulaym* tribe, and the most famous of Arab poets from among the people of *Najd*... She lived most of her life during the *Jahiliyyah* period, but she came to understand the truthfulness of Islam and embraced it. Her poetic (*oeuvre*) survives today. She had four sons who witnessed the *Battle of Qadisiyyah* and were all martyred together.

(2) The line is from a poem by *Al-Khansa`*, written in *Bahr* (meter) *Al-Basit*) and comprising 36 total lines. The entirety of the line, as recorded in the poetic encyclopaedia, is as follows:

And of Sakhr, to mourn him unto remission—

He was as though a mountain peak topped with fire.

This statement by Al-Khansa' about her brother, is a metaphor symbolic of the fact that he was well-known and famous to everyone. When the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* heard this line of poetry, he said: 'Damned woman! It was not enough for her to make him into a mountain; she had to put fire atop it as well.'⁽¹⁾

In the verse under consideration, we therefore catch a glimpse of Allah's inimitability and His providing a sign to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: if we asked an economist or a man of industry when history first saw huge ships composed of several deck levels, being so large as to look like mountains moving across the sea, he would answer that such a phenomenon appeared for the first time in the eighteenth century. This means that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not see such ships in his lifetime; but if that is the case, who informed him of such inventions, such that they might be compared to mountains in this verse? Moreover, how did he know that they would look like mountains? It is Allah *Glorified is He* giving us signs proving the truthfulness of His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Moreover, *al-jawari* (vessels⁽²⁾ running across the sea) need energy or power to cause them to run. Where does such energy come from? The first ships were powered by the winds, or else by the pushing of the waters against the hull: if a ship were moving with the current, it was the power of that current that moved it; and if it were moving against the current, the people sailing the ship made it so by harnessing wind power via sails. If the winds died down, sailors would remain motionless on the ocean's surface.

We can therefore say that these ships moved and stood still according to Allah's command (since He commands the winds and currents). If a ship moved against the current in a river, its sailors and deckhands had to pull it along with ropes while they walked along the beach.

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- (1) *Al-'Alusi cites this in his explanation of the verse under consideration (18/280): 'Damned woman! She was not content to compare him to a mountain, so she added fire on top, too.' Likewise, Ar-Razi cites this saying in his Mafatih Al-Ghayb (13/440).*
- (2) 'Vessels' in this verse refers to ships continuously moving across the water. The Arabic word is *jawari*, sing. *Jariya*, an active participle meaning 'that which runs/flows.' These ships are called by this name because they move across the water. The term may also refer to a young (sexually mature) woman, indicating that the water of young men flows in her. *Al-Qurtubi's Quranic commentary, 6076-6079).*

Then, the True Lord says:

إِنْ يَشَأْ يُسْكِنِ الرِّيحَ فَيَظْلَلْنَ رَوَاكِدَ عَلَى ظَهْرِهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ

**If He willed, He could bring the wind to a standstill and they would lie motion- less on the surface of the sea – there truly are signs in this for anyone who is steadfast and thankful[33]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 33)**

‘*Fayazhlalna rawakid*’ refers to the ships which ‘lie motionless on the surface of the sea’ (*ash-Shura*: 33). *Rawakid* means still, fixed, unmoving; perhaps a wave might move them out of their place, but they are not sailing across the water. The statement ‘...There truly are signs in this for anyone who is steadfast and thankful...’ (*ash-Shura*: 33) employs the emphatic participle *sabbar* (steadfast) a stronger form of the active participle *sabir* (patient). The stronger form *sabbar* is used here because the sailing of ships entails much effort and hardship, and such hardship must exude great patience.

Similarly, this verse uses the Arabic word *shukur* (thankful) which is the more emphatic form of the word *shakir*. Here, it is employed because the movement of ships across the water is one of Allah’s signs and wonders deserving of thanks.

This verse comes after Allah’s statement: ‘Whatever misfortune befalls you [people], it is because of what your own hands have done...’ (*ash-Shura*: 30). Such misfortunes also require patience and gratitude from us since hardships, when they do beset people, do not fall upon a person with such magnitude that they take everything away from a person all at once. In this, Allah *Glorified is He* might afflict us in one area of our lives, but He exempts us from affliction in all others. We therefore need patience regarding the aspect of our lives beset by troubles, and gratitude for those which are not.

Concerning this fact, it is recounted that⁽¹⁾ ‘Abdullah ibn Ja’far⁽²⁾ hurt his leg as he was travelling to Damascus, and he found no one to treat him for the

(1) *The story of amputating the leg of `Abdullah ibn Ja`far*

(2) ‘Abdullah ibn Ja’far ibn `Abu Taleb. He was born in the land of Abyssinia (modern-day Ethiopia) in the year 1 A.H. when his parents emigrated to that land. He is the first=

entire length of his journey. His wound festered and became infected with gangrene, and they decided to amputate his leg. The others travelling with him sent for mandrake, an anaesthetic used at the time to deaden the pain in surgery. However, he refused to drink the drug, saying: 'By Allah, I should not be heedless of my lord for even one instant!' So, they truly cut off his leg without anaesthetic because he who takes joy in such closeness to Allah, as comes through full mental awareness untouched by drug—he will truly feel no pain, when he is thus accompanied by Allah.

It is this accompaniment through which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his Companion were protected in the cave, when he said to his Companion: 'Do not grieve, for Allah is with us.' Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* said: 'O Messenger of Allah, if any one of them (the disbelievers who chased them) looked under his feet, he would find us trampled there.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him: 'What do you think of two, the third of whom is Allah?'⁽¹⁾ This is so because those two people gathered are in Allah's company, even though they cannot see Him. Likewise, whoever is found to be in Allah's company is granted a portion of this characteristic.

Thus, when `Abdullah ibn Ja`far said: 'By Allah, I should not be heedless of my lord for even one instant!' they cut off his leg as he was in this state of being in the company of Allah, thus preventing him from feeling any pain. When the others wanted to bury his leg, he grabbed hold of it and said: 'O Allah! I beseech you! If you tested me by afflicting one limb, you let the other parts of my body be sound.' This is truly the model of the patient, deeply grateful servant, who is longsuffering in trials and thankful for the blessings he receives.

Next, we read Allah's words: 'If He willed, He could bring the wind to a standstill...' (*ash-Shura*: 33), which exhibits another shade of the Quran's miraculous nature. In the old days, boats could only move along by wind power, which has since given way to the use of motors and electricity to

= Muslim to be born in Abyssinia, from whence he travelled to Basra, Kufah, and Damascus. He was one of the princes in the army at the Battle of Safin. He died in Medina in the year 80 A.H. / 700 A.D. [from Az-Zirikli's *Signs*, 74-76]

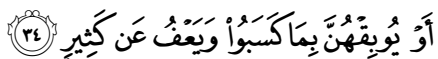
(1) This is a Hadith whose correctness has been verified. Al-Bukhari extracts it for its correctness (4663), as does Muslim (2381), quoting from a Hadith of Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him*.

power ships. However, the fact that ships no longer need wind to move across the sea does not mean that this verse does not continue to be relevant in our time. On the contrary, its significance is constant and everlasting unto the last hour before judgment since the word *rih* (wind) in this context means any kind of force or energy, not just air currents.

We see this elsewhere in the Quran such as Allah's statement 'And obey Allah and His Messenger and do not quarrel for then you will be weak in hearts and your power will depart...' (*al-Anfal*: 46). '*Tadh-haba rihukum*' means 'your power will depart' thus denoting power or capability of any kind, whether air, steam or other such sources of energy.

Then, we read the His words: '...there truly are signs in this for anyone who is steadfast and thankful.' (*ash-Shura*: 33) The fact that this comes after the statement '...and they would lie motionless on the surface of the sea...' (*ash-Shura*: 33) indicates a counsel given to the ship's crew and passengers, who should not be sad if the winds become still and the ship stops moving. They are to accept this trial gracefully and with patience, and to give thanks that the crisis is not worse, such as a shipwreck, a hurricane, or some other catastrophe. In all, they should be patient in suffering, and grateful for those things which they still have.

Then, the True Lord says:



**Or He could cause them to be wrecked on account
of what their passengers have done – God pardons
much [34] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 34)**

'*Yubiquhunna*' (cause them to be wrecked) (*ash-Shura*: 34) means or they will be caused to drown. His words '...on account of what their passengers have done...' (*ash-Shura*: 34) refer to those transgressions which the passengers had committed previously, such as drinking, gambling and so on. His words: '...Allah pardons much' (*ash-Shura*: 34) mean that He forgives many of their sins and does not punish or chastise the people because of them.

Elsewhere, the True Lord clarifies this matter: 'it is He who enables you to travel on land and sea until, when you are sailing on ships, and rejoicing in

the favouring wind, a storm arrives: waves come at those on board from all sides and they feel there is no escape. Then they pray to Allah, professing sincere devotion to Him, "If You save us from this we shall be truly thankful." Yet no sooner does He save them than, back on land, they behave outrageously against all that is right...' (*Yunus*: 22-23).

Then, the True Lord says:

وَيَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ مَخِيصٍ ﴿٣٥﴾

**To let those who argue about Our messages know that
there is no escape for them [35] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 35)**

This verse means: those who argue about Allah's messages have no refuge or escape from His punishment. Those who argue with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about Allah's messages and deny him, know the Power of Allah *Glorified is He* over them; since He could, if he so wished, smite them with a great and powerful blow.

Hasa (mentioned in the verse as *mahis*: escape) means: going here and there in a place without finding comfort or rest. Egyptian colloquial Arabic employs the active participle form of this verb in the expression: '*fulan hayis*' (So-and-so does not find a place to rest). He does not know where to go, and so he has no refuge or a place of safety.

Then, the True Lord says:

فَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَمِنَّعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ
وَأَبْقَى لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

**What you have been given is only the fleeting
enjoyment of this world. Far better and more lasting
is what God will give to those who believe and trust
in their Lord [36] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 36)**

'*Min shay'in*' (Whatever thing...) (*ash-Shura*: 36) refer to all enjoyable things of this world such as material wealth, women, the joy of raising children, professional careers, good health, fame etc. All these are but pleasant aspects

of this mortal existence which we enjoy while on the earth. Even though we know this world will last from the creation of Adam *peace be upon him* until the Last Hour, an individual person does not experience it as such. An individual person's experience of this world is only that time which he and he alone remains on earth, since time cannot be added to his life from the lives of others; it is not the person who passes by the world, but rather, it is the world that passes by the person.

Thus, whatever pleasure one may experience in this life, it only lasts as long as one's lifetime on earth, and ultimately passes away. '...What is with Allah is better and more lasting for those who believe and rely on their Lord.' (*ash-Shura*: 36) In other words, that which is with Allah is better because the enjoyment we have on earth is commensurate with our own meagre efforts and abilities. In the Hereafter, however, the enjoyment corresponds to the True Lord's ability to bestow happiness. Moreover, earthly pleasures are fleeting, whereas joy in the Hereafter is everlasting.

In sum, when we compare the level of enjoyment we have on earth to that experience in the Hereafter, we learn that what is with Allah *Glorified is He* is far better and more enduring. When we realize this truth, it is incumbent upon us to strive for the fruits of the Hereafter, which show Allah's infinite beneficence. The eternality of joy in the Hereafter is placed upon all those who believe and trust in Allah *Glorified is He*. In this, there are two aspects: *aqida* (creed) of true religious principles, and exerting one's own efforts to live a good life.

We may note here the difference between a person who first does his part to be successful, then leaves the rest up to Allah *Glorified is He* and a person who says, 'I trust in Allah!', but does not do his part to accomplish his goals. The true believer trusts in Allah in his heart, and puts his faith into action.

This verse: 'Whatever thing you are given, is only the fleeting enjoyment of this world. What is with Allah is better and more lasting for those who believe and rely on their Lord' (*ash-Shura*: 36) was revealed in response to what a group of leaders of the tribe of Quraysh did. They (the most of which was Walid ibn Al-Mughira) envied the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* when Allah *Glorified is He* set him apart as a prophet. They said:

‘...why was this Quran not sent down to a distinguished man, from either of the two cities?’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) They were referring to a person who had such and such riches. Allah *Glorified is He* responded by stating that all these are transient joys and pleasures of earth, i.e. worldly and transitory, and that the joy which is with Allah *Glorified is He* is far greater and more enduring.

وَالَّذِينَ يَجْنَبُونَ كِبْرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشِ وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوا هُمْ يَغْفِرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

Who shun great sins and gross indecencies; who forgive when they are angry [37] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 37)

The meaning of the verb ‘shun’ is to remove oneself from those things which lead to ‘...the more heinous sins and abominations....’ ‘More heinous sins’ refer to those great transgressions which Allah has warned us not to commit, and for which He has allotted punishment. The Arabic word *al-fawahish* (abominations) means that which is most vile and repulsive in Allah’s sight. Both heinous sins and abominations require setting our boundaries so as not to commit them.

We have said previously that the various messengers throughout the ages agreed that heinous sins are not permitted, and they have urged all humankind to avoid these shameful acts by all their body parts. The heart must be made free of worshipping any but Allah, the True Lord, of insisting on committing sins, feeling secure from the plan of Allah and giving up hope of His Mercy. Likewise, the tongue must be purged of bearing false witness, telling lies, defaming pure and chaste women, and the false oath, being that oath which plunges the one who says it into hellfire. The false oath is the act of lying about what has previously happened and swearing by that lie, an act for which there is no atonement. However, if a person swears to do something in the future, then found that there is something better to be done, Allah allows him to do what is better and to do a *kaffara* (fasting, feeding the needy or freeing a slave) for breaking his oath. Likewise, the stomach must be free of alcohol and the consumption of the orphan’s sustenance or of that which is gained through usury, the private parts must be free of any unlawful relations, the hands of theft and killing, and the legs of fleeing from duty on the day that the army marches into battle. And above all, the whole self must be purified from disobedience to one’s parents.

We then read Allah's statement, '...And who whenever they are moved to anger, readily forgive' (*ash-Shura*: 37). Anger is the boiling of rage at the thing which has angered or exhausted you; if that thing happens to be a person, a desire for vengeance might arise, or possibly hatred and envy. For this reason, the True Lord teaches us to forgive, to excuse others their faults, and to pardon; if we want Allah to forgive us, then we too must be willing to forgive others. If we consider the human condition, we note that the result of forgiveness and mercy is commendable, whereas the result of retaliation and vengeance is disastrous. Therefore, the True Lord counsels us to take the side of forgiveness and to be on guard against violent feelings of anger, and to not be carried away by them. He tells us not to overstep our rightful bounds when these feelings arise, even in the case of (lawful) reprisal: '...Just retribution is ordained for you in cases of killing...' (*al-Baqara*: 178). After setting the terms of legal revenge through retribution, He reminds us of that which is better to us, namely excusing others their sins: '...And if something [of his guilt] is remitted to a guilty person by his brother, this [remission] shall be adhered to with fairness, and restitution to his fellow-man shall be made in a goodly manner...' (*al-Baqara*: 178). Allah establishes the punishment so as to give the guilty person his due comeuppance after which He opens the door of forgiveness to that person.

We thus find that true religion prevents any person from intervening on behalf of a person to prevent lawful punishments established by Allah except in cases of murder which allow such intervention. This is so because, when the murder victim's surviving relatives forgive the killer, they spread undue amity in society; and the killer feels himself to be in their debt, knowing his soul is contingent upon that forgiveness.

Let us read another of Allah's statements on this matter: 'Repel [evil] with something that is better – and lo! He between whom and yourself was enmity [may then become] as though he had [always] been close [to you], a true friend! Yet [to achieve] this is not given to any but those who are to be patient in adversity: it is not given to any but those endowed with the greatest good fortune!' (*Fussilat*: 34-35) This is a truth which the Creator has put into place, for He knows His slaves well. In this context, we find some people who say,

‘I swear I repelled evil with something better, but to no avail’! To such a person we must say, ‘You should re-examine yourself and the sincerity of your behaviour. You think that you have repelled evil with something better, but this is not really the case. Rather, you are tempting Allah, and trying to tempt Allah indicates doubt. If you spoke the truth, then this verse would also be correct along with your words. He spoke truly who said:’⁽¹⁾

O you are vexed by the deeds of this and that
 Repel your ransom with something better, in order to see he
 [between whom and thyself was enmity a friend].

Next, we must ponder why this verse mentions the subject of the sentence in the statement ‘...[they] readily forgive’ through inclusion of the subject pronoun *hum* (they) which is semantically unnecessary since Arabic verbs reflect their subjects through conjugation. Here, the pronoun *hum* is also included in order to emphasize that ‘they’ are the ones who have made the decision to forgive, not out of flattery or because they are forced to do so. For example, a person who has been wronged by a guilty party might very well send someone else to trial in their stead in order to intercede on the guilty person’s behalf. In this case, however, the gratitude and good favour would be due to the person who intercedes, rather than the person who sent him. So, why would he not do the forgiving himself, thus collecting the reward of gratitude and favour himself?

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

Respond to their Lord; keep up the prayer; conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; give to others out of what We have provided for them [38] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 38)

Allah’s statement ‘and who respond to [the call of] their Lord...’ means those who respond in faith, clearly exhibiting *‘aqida*, internal conviction of true religious principles. The statement which follows shows the practical application of that conviction through action: ‘And are constant in prayer; and whose rule [in all matters of common concern] is consultation among

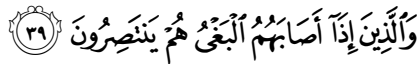
(1) From the poetry of Sheikh Ash-Sha’rawi *Allah rest his soul*.

themselves; and who spend on others out of what We provide for them as sustenance.' This verse is one of several which link prayer and *zakat* (tithes) since both of them are reasons for perfect Muslim individuals and society. *zakat* is money yielded up from us in order to help those in need; they are therefore a monetary sacrifice on the giver's part. In like fashion, prayer represents a greater *zakat* since people sacrifice time in order to pray, time which could otherwise be used to make money.

What is different about this verse from those others which connect prayer and *zakat* is the injunction to call a *shura* (counsel). It is the True Lord *Glorified is He* who is speaking here, and we should thus pause and consider the wisdom in what is being said. In thinking about why *shura* (counsel meeting) is called for in this verse which links prayer and *zakat*, when so many other verses connect these two concepts without such a command. We might say that the phrase '[they] are in constant prayer' means praying to the fullest extent, which would be at gatherings in the mosque. In this sense, those praying together at mosque take the opportunity to gather in prayer, as though calling a counsel among themselves. We should also note that in this instance, the call for a counsel is not for discussing a commandment neither of Allah nor of His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. Rather, it is for discussing an issue up for debate, being that no hard-and-fast stipulation was issued on this matter. The main point is that matter should be conducted in counsel by those who are specialized, as we see concerning the question of issuing of *fatwa*.⁽¹⁾ That is why we call for any *fatwa* to be agreed upon by several people, not just one. This is so because discussing a question or issue in a group must necessarily lead to the right answer. Moreover, a decision reached in counsel is more easily defended by an individual participant in that counsel, even if his opinions differ from those held by others.

(1) *Among the various examples of shura (counselling), we find the consultation of 'Umar with Al-Hurmuzan after the latter had embraced Islam. 'Umar counselled with him regarding the military campaigns, and Al-Hurmuzan said to him: 'Those enemies of Muslims are like a bird with feathers, two wings, and two legs. If one wing breaks, the other wing will rise with the two legs and the head. If the second wing is broken, then the two legs will rise with the head. But if the head is crushed, then the wings and legs will perish. Verily, the head is Kisra, king of the Persians; one wing is Caesar, and the other is Faris. So, order the armies of Muslims to go toward Kisra.'* Tafsir Al-Qurtubi, 6081-6089.

Next, we read, ‘...And whose rule [in all matters of common concern] is consultation among themselves...’ (*ash-Shura*: 38). In this verse, the Arabic word used for ‘counsel’ is *shura*, the gathered group itself, rather than the word *tashawur*, which connotes the process of meeting and discussing. This is for emphasis: rather than highlight the process of discussing matters in counsel, the verse underscores the assemblage itself. In like fashion, we might say, ‘He is a man of justice’, rather than ‘he is a just man’. In this example, the word ‘justice’ is more emphatic. On the matter of counsel, ‘Ali Allah be pleased with him said to the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him: ‘O Messenger of Allah, what of those matters on which we see no ruling issued by Allah, nor do we find any such ruling in the *Sunna* of His Prophet? What are we to do [on these matters]?’ The Prophet said to him, ‘Gather together the slaves (of Allah), and form a counsel, so that your decisions are not shaped by the opinion of one man alone.’⁽¹⁾



And defend themselves when they are oppressed [39]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 39)

The phrase ‘whenever tyranny afflicts them’ indicates that they have been afflicted with oppression. The phrase ‘...defends themselves’ means that they seek vengeance upon their oppressors in the same degree as they were attacked, no more. This verse shows one of Allah’s decrees, namely that vengeance against an oppressor is permissible.⁽²⁾ But the matter does not end here. Rather, the

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- (1) *At-Tabarani quotes this in Al-Mu`jam Al-Kabir (#11874), by Ibn `Abbas, who stated that `Ali ibn Abu Taleb said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, hast you considered if an issue were to confront us for which no [legislative] verses have been revealed, nor any pronouncement from you?’ He replied, ‘Gather together the believing slaves (of Allah), and form a counsel, so that judgments are not passed according to special interest.’ As-Suyuti attributes this to him in his Ad-Durr Al-Manthur, in his interpretation of the verse, ‘When Allah’s succour comes, and victory’ (an-Nasr: 1). Al-Haythami states, ‘Abdullah ibn Kisaan is one of the narrators.’ Al-Bukhari states, ‘The Hadith of this man is not recognized as authentic.’*
- (2) *There are two responses to an oppressor or dictator which were decreed by the judge Abu Bakr ibn Al-`Arabi, and which are quoted by Al-Qurtubi in his Tafsir. ‘First: the oppressor is to show publicly his immorality, be a rude presence in society, harmful to all people great and small. In this situation, retribution is the most preferable course of=*

True Lord *Glorified is He* continues with another decree to complete the picture, and He states in the verse which follows:

وَجَزَوْا سَيِّئَةً سَيِّئَةً مِّثْلَهَا فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

Let harm be requited by an equal harm, though anyone who forgives and puts things right will have his reward from God Himself — He does not like those who do wrong [40]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 40)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* is Merciful and Kind to His slaves, and when He allowed them to return and requite the evil done to them in the same degree, He meant for this to assuage the resentment of those who have been wronged, to give them peace through retribution to their oppressors. However, He then narrows the door of vengeance and widens the door of pardon, as in the verse: ‘Hence, if you have to respond to an attack [in argument], respond only to the extent of the attack levelled against you; but to bear yourselves with patience is indeed far better for [you, since Allah is with] those who are patient in adversity.’ (*an-Nahl*: 126) Thus, when the True Lord states, ‘And the retribution for an evil act is an evil one like it’, it is to bring peace to one’s heart, to end the enmity and hatred between the wrongdoer and he who has been wronged. Indeed, is it possible to respond to wrongdoing in the same degree, with no escalation or increase of violent force? In a simple example, if one person strikes another person, or slaps a person, can the person who has been struck respond without increasing the amount of force he uses? And if the person who was struck, then strikes back harder, has that person not also become an attacker? Hence the injunction of forgiveness and pardoning one’s foe, which provides an escape from this, narrow cycle

There is a story⁽¹⁾ of a usurious man in Italy who lent money to another person, on the condition that if the debtor did not pay back the loan on the

= action. Second: his oppression or harm is recognized to be a lapse of judgment. The guilty party acknowledges his wrongdoing and asks forgiveness. In this case, pardon is the most preferable choice.’

(1) This man is a Jew named Shylock, from the Shakespearean play (*The Merchant of Venice*). Trans. Usain Ahmad Amin. Dar Ash-Shuruq, 1994.

appointed day, his creditor could take a pound of his flesh in repayment for the unpaid debt. When the appointed day came, the debtor could not pay what he owed, and his creditor took the case before a judge. The judge ruled in his favour and told him it was his right to take the pound of flesh, but that if he took more than that, the court would take anything over a pound from his [the creditor's] flesh. Thus, the usurious man relinquished his claims on the man's flesh.

For this reason, Allah says, '...Hence, whoever pardons [his foe] and makes peace, his reward rests with Allah – for, verily, He does not love evildoers.' It is almost as though the person who deserves to be avenged will be led to do evil if he tries to requite that evil which has been done to him. In this same vein, we read a Hadith told by `Ali *Allah be pleased with him* that the prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'When the Day of Resurrection comes, a herald will proclaim, "Whosoever has his reward with Allah, let him enter paradise." No one responded (to the Prophet), so He said, 'Whosoever has his reward with Allah, let him enter paradise' (without reckoning). So they asked who it is that has his reward with Allah. The Prophet responded, 'He who pardons his foe.'⁽²⁾

It is also recounted that one day, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was sitting with his Companions when he suddenly burst out laughing. `Umar asked him, 'O Messenger of Allah, why are you laughing?' The Prophet said, 'I saw my Lord judging between two men. One of the two said, 'Lord, since this man has done me wrong, take away some of the good deeds attributed to him and give him back the same number of bad deeds.' The Lord said, 'He has no good deeds. But look!' The man looked, and suddenly he saw palaces and other marvellous things. He asked, 'To whom does all this belong, Lord?' The Lord replied, 'To he who forgives his brother.' The man said, 'I forgive him!' The Lord said, 'Then take the hand of your brother, and both of you enter paradise together.'⁽¹⁾ We can see how the Creator corrects

(2) *At-Tabrani quotes this in Al-Mu`jam Al-Awsat, from Anas ibn Malik, that the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Then the herald will proclaim, "Let him be resurrected unto his reward from Allah and enter paradise." He then said this a second time, after which one man asked, 'Who is it that has his reward with Allah?' He answered, 'Those who forgive others.' Al-Qurtubi cites this in his Tafsir. He notes that Al-Mawardi (Alboacen in Latin) also refers to this Hadith*

(1) *Al-Hakim correctly renders this from `Anas ibn Malik: 'Umar asked, 'What makes you laugh O Messenger of Allah?' He replied, 'Two men from my nation knelt before=*

the errors of his slaves in this manner, and what we must do is apply this abstract idea in our daily lives.

As a final note, the word 'evil' in the statement 'And the retribution for an evil act is an evil one like it' (*ash-Shura*: 40) does not refer to sin or defiance of Allah, but rather something bad in word or deed which has been done to a person by another.

وَلَمَنِ أَنْصَرَ بَعْدَ ظُلْمِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ مَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ سَبِيلٍ ﴿٤١﴾ إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَظْلِمُونَ النَّاسَ وَيَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٤٢﴾

There is no cause to act against anyone who defends himself after being wronged [41] But there is cause to act against those who oppress people and transgress in the land against all justice – they will have an agonizing torment [42]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 41-42)

Allah's statement 'Yet indeed, as for any who defend themselves after having been wronged...' means those who have avenged themselves against their oppressors. The statement '...No blame whatever attaches to them' refers to the fact that there is no punishment reserved for them since they did not overstep the bounds of self-defence or vengeance for wrongs done to them.

'Blame attaches but to those who oppress [other] people and behave outrageously on earth, offending against all right: for them there is grievous

= *the Lord of Glory. One of these two men said, "Oh Lord, recompense the wrong done to me by this man by taking away from his blessings." The Lord said to the man who made this request, "What would you have me do with this, your brother, since he has no good deeds from which to remove blessings from him?" The man replied, "Let him bear some of my crimes as his own." At this point, the eyes of Allah's Messenger filled with tears, and said, "The fact that that day will be great and terrible enough, without a person having to answer for the sins of another, requires people to carry their own crimes and sins." Thus, Allah said to the man who demanded justice, "Lift up your eyes and gaze into the garden." The man looked and said, "Lord, I see coffers of gold and golden palaces studded with pearls. Unto which prophet or martyr does all this belong?" The Lord said, "Unto he who pays the price." The man asked, "Who possesses all of this?" The Lord said, "You do." The man asked, "On what condition?" The Lord replied, "That you forgive this, your brother." The man said, "I forgive him!" The Lord said, "Then take the hand of this, your brother, and both of you enter paradise together." Al-Hakim states, 'This is correct according to Al-Bukhari and Muslim.'*

suffering in store!’ The True Lord takes His slaves by the hand and leads them to a more peaceful path than revenge, and more fruitful in result.

Allah states:

وَلَمَنْ صَبَرَ وَعَفَرَ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ ﴿٤٣﴾

**Though if a person is patient and forgives,
this is one of the greatest things [43]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 43)**

Elsewhere, Luqman gives counsel to his son: ‘O my dear son! Be constant in prayer, and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and bear in patience whatever [ill] may befall you: this, behold, is something that requires determination’ (*Luqman*: 17). The difference is that in this verse, the *lam* of emphasis (translated as ‘indeed’) does not appear as it does in the statement ‘But withal, if one is patient in adversity and forgives – this, behold, is (*indeed*) something that requires determination’ (*ash-Shura*: 43). It is true that the general meaning of these two verses is one and the same, i.e. the call to patience in adversity. The difference is that the temptation to revenge is greater in a trial or hardship brought against a person by an adversary or enemy since interaction with that enemy incites the wronged party to anger and vengeance. For this reason, the verse under consideration includes the emphatic ‘indeed’; whereas Luqman’s advice to his son concerning a calamity which was not brought upon him by an opponent or adversary does not include such emphasis. As for having patience when one is tempted to seek revenge upon an enemy and return the evil done to him in kind, such one needs strength of will to exercise patience, and great reserves of energy capable of moving him out of the realm of self-defence into that of forgiveness and pardon. Hence the emphasis of this point twice in the same verse

Allah’s statement ‘But withal, if one is patient in adversity and forgives...’ refers to two stages: that of patience when someone harms us, and forgiveness of that harm. Many people remain patient in the face of adversity, but do not forgive the person who has done them wrong, since the stage of forgiveness requires the power of faith and resolve—as the verse states, ‘...This, behold, is indeed something to set one’s heart upon!’ Here, the statement refers to

those important matters which require resolve, firmness of will, and strength necessary to extinguish the fires of hatred, loathing, and vengeance; in addition, they require the strength to forgive. Such attributes belong only to the believer who trusts that what is with Allah is better and more enduring, and that through forgiving others, he will receive by right that which he did not obtain through revenge.

We see, then, that the True Lord permits those who have been wronged to seek revenge after which He calls people to pardon their enemies. This raises the question of when vengeance is an appropriate response to wrongdoing, and when it is better to forgive. The learned men have said that forgiveness is better than revenge or self-defence, except in cases where the guilty party is devoid of conscience such that pardoning his crimes only results in his continued wrongdoing, or clemency toward him only results in his continued bloodlust. In such an instance, it is better to return the wrongdoer's evil to him in kind such that he does not continue to harm others.

Many Arab poets of the classical era attended to this truth such as Al-Mutanabbi⁽¹⁾:

It is clement to forget about clemency

If through clemency the paths leading to evil are enlarged.⁽²⁾

He also wrote:

If you show generosity to the generous, you will own him,

But if you did the same with cunning, he will be rebellious.

Replacing the sword with leniency

Is as harmful as replacing leniency with the sword⁽³⁾

(1) Al-Mutanabbi, a wise poet born in Kufah in the year 303 A.H. / 915 A.D... He was raised in Ash-Sham and began to say poetry when he was just a boy. He made claims to prophet-hood while in the desert of Samaawah, and he was imprisoned until he repented of his crime. He was killed at the hands of Faatik ibn Abu Jahl Al-'Asadi in the year 354 A.H. / 965 A.D.

(2) This line is from an ode by Al-Mutanabbi, written in the long metre and comprising 36 total lines. *Al-Mawsu'a Ash-Shi'riyya*

(3) These two lines come from a second ode by Al-Mutanabbi, also written in the long metre and comprising 42 total lines. *Al-Mawsu'a Ash-Shi'riyya*

Another poet⁽¹⁾ writes:

There is no good in leniency if it does not encourage

Impulses which protect it from being disturbed⁽²⁾

The history of the early Arab tribes also confirms this truth. Some tribes, such as the Beni Mazin, were powerful and ferocious, and out of self-defence would not accept harm done to them. Because of this, everyone came to fear them, and no one dared attack them. Then there were those tribes that forgiveness increased their evil deeds, such as the tribe of Beni Laqita from Beni Dhuhl. Then there were tribes like Tayy', which was a peaceful tribe, forgiving and pardoning the wrong done to it by other tribes. For this reason, the Beni Dhuhl began to lust after their belongings, and they continuously attacked until the tribal poet of Tayy' burst out in condemnation of them after the attackers had invaded their land and made off with their livestock, his imagination fuelled with the results of forgiveness of those who do not warrant it. He said, in description of his tribe:

It is as though your Lord created none to fear Him

Out of all mankind, except for them

They reward the wickedness of the wicked with pardon,

And the evil of evildoers with charity⁽³⁾

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- (1) The poet is An-Nabigha' Al Ja'di, Qays ibn 'Abdullah Abu Laylal'-Amari. He was born 54 years before the *Hijra* and died in the year 50 A.H. He lived to age 104. He was called An-Nabigha because he lived the first thirty years of his life without writing poetry, after which he excelled (*nabagha*) in its composition. He was among those who desisted from idol worship and alcohol consumption before the advent of Islam, which he embraced later and followed the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*.
- (2) This line is from a poem by An-Nabigha' Al Ja'di written in the Tawil meter and comprising 85 total lines (the line cited is line 80). *Al-Mawsu'a Ash-Shi'riyya*
- (3) Regarding these two lines: Ibn Dawud Al-Asfahani quotes them in *Az-Zahra* and attributes them to a man from the *Benu 'Anbar* tribe, from a poem with the following first line: *If I were of the tribe of Benu Mazin, my camels would never travel / To the Benu Laqita tribe, of Dhuhl ibn Shaybana*. However, he switches around the order of the two cited lines. Likewise, Al-'Abidi in *At-Tadhkara As-Sa'diyya*, where he recounts the name 'Qarit ibn 'Anif.' -Al-Jahiz cites only the first of the two lines, in his *Book of Animals*. He states, 'Another man said this when his people justified their going to=

Still another poet⁽¹⁾ writes the lines, now famous in Arabic literature:
 We pardoned Benu Dhuhl⁽²⁾,
 And said, these people are our brothers!
 If only the days would bring back
 This, our people, as it once was.
 But when their evil spoke
 And became very clear,
 We walked the walk of the lion
 That comes angrily,
 With an attenuated blow,
 Enfeebled and frightening at once.
 And a piercing attack, like the mouth of a drinking skin⁽³⁾,
 Full and bulging

= battle out of piety.' Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi Al-'Andalusi quotes these lines in his *Al-'Aqd Al-Farid*, and states: 'A man from among the Arabs said that his people were blameworthy and that the Benu Shayban had come and raided their camels. He appealed for help but to no avail. His people were weak, and he said this line in description of them. This is also the explanation given by 'Abd Al-Qadir Al-Baghdadi in *Khazanat Al-'Adab*. Ibn Qutayba Al-Dinuri quotes these lines in *'Uyun Al-'Akhbar* under the caption: 'A poem by a man from the Benu 'Anbar tribe, in which he praises the Benu Mazin and satirizes his own people, reviling them in comparison with other tribes.'

- (1) The poet is Al-Fanad Az-Zamani, whose full name is Sahl ibn Shayban ibn Rabi'a, of Bakr ibn Wa'il. He was a poet of the pre-Islamic period; in his day, he was ruler, leader, and knight of the Bakr tribe. He fought and won the Bakr war, and lived to be one hundred years old. He was called 'Al-Fanad' because of the magnanimity of his personal character, which was like unto the height of a mountain, of which he was the peak. *Al-Mawsu'a Ash-Shi'riyya*
- (2) Dhuhl refers to a tribe. It can also refer to a son of Bakr. In both cases, the two Dhuhls stem from Rabi'a. One is Dhuhl ibn Shayban, and the other is Dhuhl ibn Tha'laba. *Lisan Al-'Arab*
- (3) Drinking skin (*ziqq*), i.e. a receptacle for porting water. It was normally made of animal skin, and all other drinking vessels (e.g. cups, bowls) were filled from this receptacle. Abu Hanifa states, 'The drinking skin is that which all drink is transmitted by.'

At times, showing clemency to one's foe,
is a form of submission to humiliation.

Evil sometimes carries deliverance
When charity delivers us not⁽¹⁾

And on this topic, how beautiful are the words of `Ali *Allah be pleased with him*:

If I were in need of leniency,

At times, I still need to disregard that need.

I have one horse for dispensing clemency, bridled thereby,

And one horse to overlook it, saddled with disregard.

Those who seek my clemency will have it,

And those who expose themselves to my anger will have what they deserve.⁽²⁾

وَمَنْ يُضِلِّ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ ۖ وَتَرَى الظَّالِمِينَ لَمَّا رَأَوْا
الْعَذَابَ يَقُولُونَ هَلْ إِلَىٰ مَرَدٍّ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ ﴿٤٤﴾

**Anyone God allows to stray will have no one else
to protect him: you [Prophet] will see the
wrongdoers, when they face the punishment,
exclaiming, 'Is there any way of going back?' [44]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 44)**

Allah's statement 'he whom Allah lets go astray' means that Allah is the One Who decides on that person's straying from the path. This is because guidance along the right path comes from Allah, and He has made clear to humankind the path of good and that of evil, by guidance to that which is

(1) By Al-Fanad Az-Zamani, written in the divided abundant metre and comprising 26 total lines. We must also take into consideration the great difference between the version quoted by Ash-Sha`rawi *Allah rest his soul* and alternate ones. In some versions, the line states, 'We pardoned the tribe of Benu Dhuhl', while in others it says, 'We renounced the tribe of Benu Dhuhl.'

(2) These lines appear in *Al-Mawsu'a Ash-Shi'riyya*, taken from two poets: Muhammad ibn Hazim Al-Bahili from Basra, who lived in Baghdad and died in the year 215 A.H. Muhammad ibn Wahib Al-Hamiri, also from Basra, who lived his life in Baghdad and passed away 225 A.H. However, it is believed that these two poets are the same person.

good and the proscription against that which is evil. This guidance is what we call guidance by showing and conducting, and the True Lord has provided such guidance for the believer and disbeliever alike. Indeed, Allah guides all people. The believer takes such guidance and applies it in his life, walking along the path which Allah has laid out through proscription. Because of this, Allah increases the guidance given to such a one.

As for the disbeliever, he ignores this right guidance and does not apply it in his life. For this reason, Allah causes such a person to go increasingly astray, something which the disbeliever has chosen unto himself. Allah says, regarding the believers, ‘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 disbeliever, his lack of faith has been stamped onto his heart such that he cannot leave behind his disbelief and let the light of faith enter.

Next, the statement, ‘...Has henceforth no protector whatever...’ means no one to protect or support him. ‘Henceforth’ means, after Allah. Then, we read, ‘...And so you will see such evildoers [on Judgment Day, and will hear how] they exclaim as soon as they behold the suffering [that awaits them], “Is there any way of return?”’ These evildoers are asking if it is possible for them to come back to earth, repent, and to do good deeds. This is the question of a weak and feeble person who cannot fool himself since he has seen with his own eyes that punishment which he tried to ignore and cover up in this mortal world.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* exposes the lie behind this claim, as we see in another of His verses, addressing the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘If you could but see [them] when they will be made to stand before the fire and will say, “Oh, would that we were brought back [to life]: then we would not give the lie to our Lord’s messages, but would be among the believers!” But nay – [they will say this only because] the truth which they used to conceal [from themselves] in the past will have become obvious to them; and if they were brought back [to life], they would return to the very thing which was forbidden to them: for, behold, they are indeed liars!’ (*al-An‘am*: 27-28) And still elsewhere, He says in response to those who make a lie of the afterlife: ‘[As for those who will not believe in the life to

come, they go on lying to themselves] until, when death approaches any of them, he prays: “O my Lord! Let me return, let me return [to life], so that I might act righteously in whatever I have failed [a foretime]!” Nay, it is indeed but a [meaningless] word that he utters: for behind those [who leave the world] there is a barrier [of death] until the Day when all will be raised from the dead!’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 99-100) Allah then says:

وَتَرَهُمْ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا خَشِيعَاتٍ مِنَ الدَّلِّ يَنْظُرُونَ مِنْ طَرْفٍ
خَفِيٍّ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّ الْخَسِرِينَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ
وَأَهْلِيَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ أَلَا إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ فِي عَذَابٍ مُقِيمٍ ﴿٤٥﴾

You will see them exposed to the Fire, abject in humiliation, glancing furtively, while those who believed exclaim, ‘The losers are the ones who have lost themselves and their people on the Day of Resurrection.’ Truly the evildoers will remain in lasting torment[45] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 45)

In His statement ‘And you will see them...’, ‘them’ refers to disbelievers. The phrase ‘...exposed to that [doom]...’ means that they are exposed to the hellfire. ‘...Humbling themselves in abasement...’ means they are forced into submission out of great fear. For this reason, they are ‘...looking [around] with a furtive glance...’, i.e. stealing glances, but unable to look for too long since the shame heaped upon them hurts their eyes. Hence, a person says to someone who accuses him falsely, ‘look at my eyes’ since looking to each other’s eyes reveals what is true. A person who is right has a powerful eye, the strength of which is shored up by the power of truth which that person defends. As for the eye of someone in the wrong, it is weak and enfeebled by the rays of the light of truth that reveal his deception.

Moving on, we encounter the statement ‘...the while those who had attained to faith will say, “Verily, lost on [this] Day of Resurrection are they who have squandered their own and their followers’ selves!” Oh, verily, the evildoers will fall into long-lasting suffering.’ This is a declaration of the believer who has escaped punishment in the hereafter and won the reward of paradise. It is as if to say, the true loss is the state of evildoers who have lost

everything. Finally, we read, ‘...Oh, verily, the evildoers will fall into long-lasting suffering’ meaning endless suffering which is never cut off.

وَمَا كَانَتْ لَهُمْ مِّنْ أَوْلِيَآءَ يَنْصُرُونَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ ﴿٤٦﴾

They will have no allies to help them against God.

There is no way [forward] for those God allows to stray [46] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 46)

The discussion in this verse refers to the Day of Resurrection. The statement ‘and will have no protector whatever to succour them against Allah...’ means that no one will deflect from them their allotted punishment. In ‘...For he whom Allah lets go astray shall find no way [of escape]’, the phrase ‘whom Allah lets go astray’ means that they have no path of guidance since it is Allah who guides along the straight path giving a perfect example of direction and the path to follow, We have clarified previously the two types of divine guidance: guidance by direction and conducting, and guidance by success and relief granted by Allah. It is because of this division into two types that we see some orientalist pausing over certain verses, in accusation of the Quran as self-contradictory. For example, Allah states, ‘And as for [the tribe of] Thamud, We offered them guidance, but they chose blindness in preference to guidance...’ (*Fussilat*: 17). In another place, He states, ‘Verily, you cannot guide aright everyone whom you love...’ (*al-Qasas*: 56); and yet elsewhere, He states, ‘...And, verily, [on the strength thereof] you, too, guide [men] onto the straightway’ (*ash-Shura*: 52). It seems that Allah affirms guidance in one place and denies it in another. The addressee in the two verses is the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and the objection of the orientalist results from their lack of understanding of Allah’s word. The simultaneous affirmation and denial in these verses have to do with the fact that each verse deals with a separate aspect of guidance. Affirmation of guidance has one meaning, and denial thereof, another meaning. Regarding the difference, mentioned previously, between guidance by direction and guidance by aid and succour granted of Allah, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* is the one who guides by direction and conducting. Guidance by aid and succour belongs to Allah alone Who leads whomever He pleases along the straight path back to

him. Thus, in the statement ‘Verily, you cannot guide aright everyone whom you love...’ the denial is of guidance by aid and succour which belong to Allah alone and which therefore a person cannot hope to provide. The verse which reads ‘...And, verily, [on the strength thereof] thou, too, shalt guide [men] onto the straight way’ has to do with guidance by direction and conducting. We therefore see that these two instances deal with two different types of guidance and do not contradict each other.

We also read verses such as the following, which addresses Allah’s Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘...And it was not you who cast [terror into them, O Prophet], when you did cast it, but it was Allah who cast it...’ (*al-Anfal*: 17). Here, the deed is confirmed and denied all at once, since this verse is referring to two different aspects of the action, each with a separate meaning. In yet another of Allah’s statements, we read: ‘[This is] Allah’s promise. Never does Allah fail to fulfil His promise – but most people know [it] not: they know but the outer surface of this world’s life, whereas of the ultimate things they are utterly unaware.’ (*ar-Rum* 6-7) This means that most people do not understand the inner truth of things, but rather their outer appearance only.

We often use this simultaneous affirmation and denial of an action in everyday settings. For example, if a person sees his son open a book and peruse its pages, caught up therein, that person might ask his son in what he studied, but the son did not know the answers. His father could then say, ‘You studied but did not study’ meaning he read the words on paper, but he did not understand their meaning. Next, the True Lord states:

أَسْتَجِيبُوا لِرَبِّكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ مِنْ اللَّهِ
مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ مَلْجَأٍ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ نَكِيرٍ ﴿٤٧﴾

So [people] respond to your Lord before there comes a Day that cannot, against God’s will, be averted – you will have no refuge on that Day, and no possibility of denying [your sins]. If they still turn away [remember that] [47] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 47)

Here, the injunction is to respond to the Lord, namely He who created all things from nothing and provides for us as we were having nothing. It is He

Who undertook our being nurtured and insured against harm and favoured above all else; He is the Owner of the straight path, the Dispenser of our final reward, and the One with power over us. Unto Him alone do we return and seek refuge! Thus, He deserves to be obeyed, and has the right of complete obedience. Indeed, the one with sound intellect hurries in responding to Allah.

We should note here that the Quran states 'respond' rather than 'answer', since response is an aspect of a request or plea to a request. Hence, His statement 'and responds unto all who attain to faith and do righteous deeds...' means Allah responds to those who believe in Him and do acts of righteousness. For example, when the True Lord *Glorified is He* calls a person unto prayer, it is necessary that that person respond, since the call is for his or her benefit, providing a spiritual push to become closer to Allah's company. The call to prayer: 'Allah is the greatest! Come to prayer! Come to success!' is as if Allah is saying, 'Come unto me.' It is the Lord, Allah, who calls us unto Him, welcoming us unto His House and His Company, and correcting the error of our ways. However, if people do not respond to Allah's call, then they are guilty transgressors, rebels against Allah, and they deserve punishment. And Allah does not benefit from punishing them.

If we make a comparison between a meeting with Allah and one with a president or elected official, we will see a clear difference. In the latter case, it is we who request a meeting with the president or official. If this request is accepted, the time, place, and circumstances of the meeting are all chosen for us, leaving us with no control over the matter. However, in the case of Our Lord *Glorified is He* it is He Who requests a meeting with us, not just once, but five times each day and night (when we hear the call to prayer). He opens the door for us to say whatever it is that we need from Him, and we are the ones who choose when we end our meeting with Him. Such an encounter with Allah provides a spiritual boost that helps shore up our faith and creed; purify that which has become corrupted in our minds and hearts; forgive us our small transgressions; and make matters clear to our souls and calm our hearts.

Someone might very well ask how this all takes place. The answer is that Allah is unseen, and when He helps correct our errors, He does it far from our vision. When He gives good gifts unto us, He does it in His invisibility such

that we cannot perceive or take note of it at first. Hence the fact that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* prayed when a pressing matter befell him.⁽¹⁾ He used to say, regarding the matter of prayer, ‘Rest us with the prayer, O Bilal.’⁽²⁾ We should do likewise: if harsh conditions weigh us down, or if concerns or pressures cause us anguish, we should make haste to pray.

Naturally, a person’s response to Allah’s call is limited to his life here on earth, which is the time allotted to perform our labours, whether for good or ill. That is why he said, ‘...before there comes, at Allah’s behest, a Day on which there will be no turning back...’, namely, that Day of Resurrection which no one can turn back from, and the time of which will not be delayed. Then we read the statement ‘... [for] on that Day you will have no place of refuge...’ meaning there will be no place of sanctuary, where we can hide from our fate. Finally, the verse ends with ‘...and neither will you be able to deny aught [of the wrong that you have done].’ There is no way to refute or disprove or set at naught one’s punishment in the hereafter.

فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِظًا إِنْ إِلَّا إِلَيْكَ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ وَإِنَّا إِذَا أَذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ
مِنَّا رَحْمَةً فَرِحَ بِهَا وَإِنْ تُصِيبْهُمْ سَيْئَةٌ يَمَّا قَدَّمْتُ أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَإِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ كَفُورٌ ﴿٤٨﴾

‘We have not sent you [Prophet] to be their guardian: your only duty is to deliver the message. When We give man a taste of Our mercy, he rejoices in it, but if some harm befalls him on account of what he has done with his own hands, then he is ungrateful [48] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 48)

Allah’s statement ‘But if they turn away [from you, O Prophet...’ means that they turn away from the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* in all these matters and leave him, departing from the way. Elsewhere, we read, ‘for [it

(1) Abu Dawud cites this as legally binding (1124); Ahmad cites it as well (22210); Al-Bayhaqi cites it in *Dala’il An-Nubuwwa* (1335), and Sha’b Al-Iman) (3032, 3031); Abu `Awana cites it as needing to be excised (5505); and Abu Na`im cites it in *Ma`rifat As-Sahaba*) (4216) as narrated by Hudhayfa ibn Al-Yaman.

(2) Abu Dawud cites this as legally binding (4333); Ahmad cites it as well (22009); Ibn Abu `Asim in his *Sunnan* attested only once or twice (2120); and At-Tabrani quotes this in *Al-Mu`jam Al-Kabir*) (6091), narrated by a man who embraced Islam.

often happens that] when We bestow Our blessings upon man, he turns away and arrogantly keeps aloof [from any thought of Us].’ (*al-Isra’*: 83). If the people were to leave you O Muhammad behind, ‘...We have not sent you to be their keeper: you art not bound to do more than deliver the message [entrusted to you]. ...’ This verse is a consolation for the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. He was always desirous that his people would allow themselves to be rightly guided, and their resistance to his message and turning away from Allah’s guidance saddened him. He would become troubled with this matter to the point where he almost perished from the weight of it. For this reason, his Lord comforts him in more than one place in the Quran, making his burdens lighter and preventing him from taking on more than he had the energy for. In another place, we read Allah’s statement, ‘Would you, perhaps, torment yourself to death [with grief] because they [who live around you] refuse to believe [in it]?’ (*ash-Shu’ara’*: 3) Or in the chapter of *al-Kahf*, where we read: ‘But would you, perhaps, torment yourself to death with grief over them if they are not willing to believe in this message?’ (*al-Kahf*: 6) In the verse under consideration, Allah states, ‘...We have not sent you to be their keeper...’ meaning it is not the Prophet’s role to be constantly supervising people to see who believes and who disbelieves; rather, his role is to bring them the message of Islam: ‘...you are not bound to do more than deliver the message [entrusted to you]...’. It is not the Prophet’s place to force religion upon anyone.

Next, the True Lord describes a reality which human nature inevitably follows: ‘...And, behold, [such as turn away from Our messages are but impelled by the weakness and inconstancy of human nature: thus] when We give man a taste of Our grace, he is prone to exult in it....’ It is logical that a person would exult in grace shown unto him. Here, exultation means to be proud of; the gender-specific ‘man’ refers to all humankind. ‘...But if misfortune befalls [any of] them in result of what their own hands have sent forth, then, behold, man shows how bereft he is of all gratitude!’

Note here how grace is not ascribed to people because it does not result from their actions. Misfortune, on the other hand, is indeed attributed to people, since it is the consequence of peoples’ desires and actions. Thus, the calamities that befall us cannot be ascribed to Allah since they are the result

of our own deeds; if we were indeed to blame such troubles on Allah, we would be ungrateful: ‘...Behold, man shows how bereft he is of all gratitude!’ meaning, rejecting Allah’s bounty, and one of the ways to be ungrateful is to ascribe disasters or hardships to Allah.

Ingratitude and lack of appreciation for Allah’s blessings is part of human nature, except for those upon whom Allah has had great mercy. For example, a man might knock on another person’s door, asking for intercession on his behalf. The second person whose help was sought might then stay by his side and help until his situation was made right. However, the reality of the situation in this example is that Allah is the one who helps and makes hardships easier to bear, not the person who helped the man. That person just happened to be in that place at the time the other man was in need; Allah would have helped the first man whether or not there was an intermediary agent.

In sum, when one person intercedes and helps another person in trouble, that intercession was not the reason that the calamitous situation was solved, but rather, it was by coincidence that another person happened to intercede at that time. The amazing thing about this is that we sometimes find arrogant people who attribute the solving of their problems to themselves, rather than to he whom such solutions rightly belong. Such a person claims, ‘I did such and such, and I was prepared for such and such disaster’. We often see such haughtiness because being rescued from trials comes from the charitable acts of another, and such acts cause the person who has been rescued to be grateful to the person who helped him. Consider the following line of poetry:

Be good to others makes you enslave their hearts,
Since goodness subjugates man to his benefactor.⁽¹⁾

A person who denies that the betterment of his circumstances is the result of someone else’s help is trying to free himself of this humility and indebtedness to others. This is like Qarun (Korah)’s denial of those blessings which have

(1) Abu Al-Fatah Al-Basti `Ali ibn Muhammad, born in Bost, near Sijistan (present-day Sistan, the border region of eastern Iran and southwestern Afghanistan). He has a short collection of poetry. He died in the year 400 A.H. This line is from a famous poem of his, beginning with the line: *Man grows ever more inadequate in his world*. The poem is written in the simple metre and comprises 64 total lines. *Al-Mawsu`a Ash-Shi`riyya*

come as a result of the actions of others: '...this [wealth] has been given to me only by virtue of the knowledge that is in me!' (*al-Qasas*: 78)

In the past, people used to say, 'Beware of evil acts from he whom you have helped', since charity done unto others reminds them of their weaknesses and need for help. Hence the Lord's statement, '...Behold, man shows how bereft he is of all gratitude!' (*ash-Shura*: 48) namely, gratitude for the Lord's bounty upon us since people tend to attribute the bounty to their own actions, and purify them from any evil or bad deed. Both actions are considered a denial for Allah's graces over him.

When talking about His bounty towards man, the True Lord says, '...and should you try to count Allah's blessing, you could never compute them...' (*Ibrahim*: 34). We note first the use of 'and should you', which emphasizes the doubt that this would ever happen since Allah's blessings are so plentiful that one could never count them nor would anyone even try, since the only things that one would try to count are those things that could actually be counted. For example, no one would ask a person to try to count all the grains of sand in the world. In this way, Allah has blessed us beyond our ability to count and measure. Looking again at this statement, the singular phrase 'Allah's blessing' is used, rather than the plural since one blessing alone is immeasurable, let alone many blessings!

The statement '...and should you try to count Allah's blessing, you could never compute them...' (*Ibrahim*: 34) was mentioned in two verses in the Quran. The first ended with Allah's statement '...[And yet,] behold, man is indeed most persistent in wrongdoing, stubbornly ingrate!' (*Ibrahim*: 34) And the second has ended with: '...Behold, Allah is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.' (*an-Nahl*: 18) The difference of both ends is significant: Allah's bounty contains several elements, including the Giver, who is Allah; the one who is blessed, being one of Allah's slaves; and the gift itself which cannot be counted or measured. The proper description of the Giver is of being generous, one who gives liberally unto His slaves and favours them above all others even if they are ungrateful and do not appreciate His bounty. For this reason, Allah states, '...Behold, Allah is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.' (*an-Nahl*: 18) The one who is blessed may therefore be

described as ungrateful, one who does not recognize the gifts given to him by Allah, persisting in his ingratitude even unto wrongdoing. Hence this statement describes him, ‘... [And yet,] behold, man is indeed most persistent in wrongdoing, stubbornly ingrate!’ (*Ibrahim*: 34)

لِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ ۚ يَهَبُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ إِنثًا وَيَهَبُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ
الذَّكَورَ ۖ أَوْ يُزَوِّجُهُمْ ذُكْرَانًا وَإِنثًا ۚ وَبَعَثَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ عَاقِبَةً ۚ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

God has control of the heavens and the earth; He creates whatever He will – He grants female offspring to whoever He will [49] male to whoever He will, or both male and female, and He makes whoever He will barren: He is all knowing and all powerful [50] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 49-50)

Here, the True Lord talks about His possession of the heavens and the earth as an envelope for all things. In the beginning of this chapter, He talks about His dominion over the heavens and the earth, saying, ‘His is all that is in the heavens, and all that is on earth; and Most Exalted, Tremendous is He.’ (*ash-Shura*: 4) Thus, the meaning is that Allah holds the heavens, the earth and all things contained therein. The Arabic style used in these two ‘His is all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth...’, and ‘To Allah alone is the dominion over the heavens and the earth...’ is known as the style of restriction, where the Arabic preposition and the name that follows it are mentioned first, before the subject, to give the meaning of restriction. The sense given by this style is that Allah alone has possession of the heavens and earth and all things contained within them, and no one shares Him in this dominion.

The form of the word *mulk* (dominion), are the letters *mim lam kaf*. The word can be pronounced as *malk*, *milk* and *mulk*. When the word is pronounced with a *kasra*, making the word *milk*, it means all those items contained in your possession which you can use. When pronounced with a *damma*, making the word *mulk* means one’s authority and dominion over those *milk*, i.e. possessions (this is the system by which a kingdom generally functions). When said with a *fatha*, as in the verse ‘...We did not break our promise to thee of our own free will [*malkina*]...’ (*Ta Ha*: 87), it means ‘according to one’s desire’.

The same word can also be pronounced with different movements on the middle letter. It can be pronounced as *malik* (king) or one who holds dominion over others and restrict their wills. Still another form of the word is *malak* (angel) the highest of beings created by Allah. Finally, the word *milak* means the core or essence of a thing.

Thus, as noted, Allah's statement 'To Allah alone is the dominion over the heavens and the earth...' means that He is the owner and creator and the architect of them. One can possess that which one does not make, but this is not the case here.

Next, we read, '...He creates whatever He wills' meaning His creations come about according to His desire and whim. He has all-encompassing power with regard to creation; nothing is beyond His ability to fashion things as He pleases, and the elements cannot resist His creative force. Allah gives us evidence of this in our daily lives as a society for all to understand. We read, 'To Allah alone is the dominion over the heavens and the earth. He creates whatever He wills: He bestows the gift of female offspring on whomever He wills, and the gift of male offspring on whomever He wills; or He gives both male and female [to whomever He wills], and causes to be barren whomever He wills: for, verily, He is All Knowing, Infinite in His Power.' We note first the matter of Allah's bounty: '...He bestows the gift....' This means that begetting offspring is not an inalienable right for anyone, not even those who possess all the means to have children. Some people get married only to find that they cannot have children, and they pass through the trial of sterility, which is in fact another kind of gift from Allah. He who contents himself with this gift and believes it to be from Allah is recompensed for his hardships by the children of others, who obey and respect him in a way that their own parents might not enjoy. People without children may enjoy the respect and obedience of other peoples' children without the effort or fatigue of having to raise them. In reality, a child might come into the world and be a burden upon his parents.

After this, we note that the True Lord *Glorified is He* presents the female gender first, then the male: '...He bestows the gift of female offspring on whomever He wills, and the gift of male offspring on whomever He wills.' He does this because the female gender was the more undesirable of the two sexes during the Pre-Islamic period. We read, for example, 'For whenever any of

them is given the glad tiding of [the birth of] a girl, his face darkens, and he is filled with suppressed anger, avoiding all 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 contempt [which he feels for it] – or shall he bury it in the dust? Oh, evil indeed is whatever they decide!’ (*an-Nahl*: 58-59)

This hatred of young girls does not stop at mere loathing. Indeed, people would go so far as to commit infanticide, as He states: ‘And when the girl-child that was buried alive is made to ask; for what crime she had been slain.’ (*at-Takwir*: 8-9) Pre-Islamic peoples would do this because girls did not have the physical strength to work or to fight in the ongoing tribal wars, both of which were pressing needs in desert life at the time; moreover, they carry the responsibility of keeping her chastity. When true religion came to these people, this practice was changed completely. The status of women was raised, and they were made equal companions of men. For this reason, Allah puts the female before the male in this verse, ‘...He bestows the gift of female offspring on whomever He wills, and the gift of male offspring on whomever He wills.’ In this, he softens the hearts of those coarse people with regard to women, causing them to love women and teaching them that women are the vessel from which they were born, and for this reason, females have a favour over all males.

He also teaches them that the status of women in society is not right in Allah’s sight until we protect them, care for them and undertake to look after them since hatred of women is something that causes her to divert from the right path, and from her role in life. When a young girl’s family loves her, treats her with honour and respect, she gets used to that love and respect and high self-esteem, and she does not accept insults from anyone. This is because she grew up with the thought that she has high self-worth and that she is much loved by her family, and therefore no one would try to attack her or come up against her, even only with words. This differs from a girl whose family insults her as she grows up, showing her disrespect and hatred. We see such a girl grow up hating herself, with no self-worth, thinking it too much if someone shows her respect or inclines toward her in love, even only in word.

In the next verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* goes a step further with what He gives to His slaves, saying, ‘or He gives both male and female [to

whomever He wills]...'. This means that He gathers both kinds for you, thus blessing them with male and female. Then, we read, '...and causes to be barren whomever He wills...', meaning that He forbids the gift of bearing children according to His Wisdom and will. In order that one person thinks himself above others or puts himself above another. Our Lord teaches us that whether or not people can have children, has no bearing on Allah's love for them. When He blesses people with sons or daughters or spouses, it does not necessarily mean He loves them more because of this; and when He prevents people from having children, it does not mean that He is angry with them. It is according to Allah's law that He blesses some with sons and some with daughters, and that He makes barren whom He wills.

We see this law applied even among the most favoured among all of Allah's creations, namely the prophets. Allah *Glorified is He* blessed Lut (Lot) and Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon them* with daughters; He blessed Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* with a son; and He blessed Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with both, 'Abdullah, Al-Qasim, Ibrahim, Zaynab, Ruqiyah, 'Umm Kulthum, and Fatima. We thus have among the prophets several good examples of the principle of being blessed with children. Those who content themselves with Allah's Wisdom in meeting out this blessing as He sees fit, setting up a foundation of faith and submission to His will, believing it to be a gift from Allah, and even looking at the inability to bear children as a divine gift—Allah recompenses such people. For example, if He has blessed a person with daughters but no sons, and that person undertakes to raise his daughters as best he can, the Lord will compensate him for not having sons by blessing him with sons-in-law, who might even be more respectful and obedient to him than if he had had sons himself.

Finally, this verse is sealed with the following statement: '...For, verily, He is All Knowing, Infinite in His Power.' The All Knowing bestows according to His Knowledge of things, and of what is more suitable and useful to His slave. Only He knows what will and will not be good for people, according to their needs. The description of Him as 'Infinite in His Power' means that He has absolute power with respect to His creations. There is nothing of which He is incapable, and no earthly conditions limit His deeds.

In the next verse, the True Lord states :⁽¹⁾

وَمَا كَانَ لِشَيْءٍ أَنْ يُلْقِمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَائِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ
رَسُولًا فَيُوحِيَ بِإِذْنِهِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ حَكِيمٍ

**It is not granted to any mortal that God should speak to him
except through revelation or from behind a veil, or by
sending a messenger to reveal by His command what He
will: He is exalted and wise [51] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 51)**

This verse outlines the three ways by which Allah might communicate with humankind, and of which one must always be present in order to ensure that communication. The reason is that human nature does not permit people to have direct contact with Allah Who is characterized by His Majesty and Perfection and Absolute Power. Allah cannot directly encounter lowly creatures such as humans without some sort of intermediary means including inspiration like the Book of Psalms which was revealed to Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him*. The psalms were not given to Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* through an apostle or messenger—as was the Quran, for example—but rather through inspiration which Allah placed into his heart.

So then, we read Allah's statement 'And it is not given to mortal man that Allah should speak unto him otherwise than through sudden inspiration, or [by a voice, as it were,] from behind a Veil...' just as Allah spoke to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*; '...or by sending an apostle...' meaning that Allah sends a messenger with revelation. The apostle in this context is one from among the angels just as Allah has sent the angel Jibril (Gabriel) to reveal the Quran. But he was sent in a form of man, to be closer to peoples' understanding and more intimate to them.

Next, the verse states, '...Through sudden inspiration...', i.e. inspiration which Allah places into the hearts of whomever He pleases. Some might ask

(1) *Al-Wahidi notes in Asbab An-Nuzul that the Jews said unto the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him 'If you were a prophet, would you not speak with Allah and look upon Him, just as Musa (Moses) did? We will not believe in you [as a prophet] until you do this.' He replied, 'Musa (Moses) did not look upon Allah.' Upon saying this, the verse was revealed. In his Tafsir, Al-Qurtubi also quotes this Hadith, saying, 'An-Naqash, Al-Wahidi, and Ath-Tha'alibi cite this Hadith.'*

how to differentiate between inspiration given by Allah and the whisperings of Satan. The answer is that divine inspiration cannot be contradicted by other thoughts; rather, it enters us as an assured, indisputable knowledge. We have previously quoted the saying that the spiritual promptings of Allah can never be crowded out by the whisperings of Satan. We have also illustrated this point through Allah's saying in the story of Musa's (Moses's) mother: 'And so, [when he was born,] We inspired [thus] the mother of Musa's Moses: 'Suckle him [for a time], and then, when you have cause to fear for him, cast him into the river, and have no fear and do not grieve – for We shall restore him to you, and shall make him one of Our message-bearers!'" (*al-Qasas*: 7)

This is an example of communication from Allah by means of inspiration. Because divine inspiration came to her as a given, incontestable truth, she did not debate or argue. Instead, she accepted the carrying out of her fate with contentment and a surety that came from Allah; for what train of logical thought would lead a mother to think to herself, 'When you have cause to fear for him, cast him into the river'?

It is worth remembering here the attempt of some scholars of the Near East to find fault with the Quran, noting the fact that it repeats itself on several points. For example, the True Lord *Glorified is He* states elsewhere: 'When We inspired thy mother with this inspiration: "Place him in a chest and throw it into the river, and thereupon the river will cast him ashore, [and] one who is an enemy unto Me and an enemy unto him will adopt him." And [thus early] I spread My Own love over you – and [this] in order that you might be formed under My eye.' (*Ta Ha*: 38-39) However, anyone considering these two instances of revelation to Musa's (Moses's) mother will note that the first verse mentioned states '...When you have cause to fear for him...' (*al-Qasas*: 7) referring to a future time. The second verse, on the other hand, states, 'Place him in a chest, and throw it into the river...' (*Ta Ha*: 39), which is a statement made at the very time of the act itself.

Thus, the statement '...Or [by a voice, as it was,] from behind a veil...' (*ash-Shura*: 51) can be seen, as noted, in how Allah spoke with Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. Next, we read, '...Or by sending an apostle to reveal, by His leave, whatever He wills [to reveal]...' (*ash-Shura*: 51). Revelation in this

instance is unlike the manner of inspiration already discussed. Rather, this second type of communication with Allah involves direct revelation by means of a messenger from the angels, as happened with the revelation of the Holy Quran to the heart of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* by means of Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* a reputable intermediary sent by Allah to reveal the message. Indeed, Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* would come directly to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and give him those parts of the Quran that Allah wished. However, Allah *the Exalted* wanted to confirm this matter to the people, and thus he sent Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* in the form of a man who, although he had come to them from far away, did not appear to show signs of fatigue, hunger, thirst or any other signs of weariness from a long journey. Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* then asked the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* about matters of faith and affirmed that his answers were correct, in order that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* might teach the people about Islam. Then, after Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* had departed, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Indeed, [the angel] Jibril (Gabriel) came unto you to teach you of matters concerning your faith.’⁽¹⁾

This saying of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* stands as a response to those who ask whether the Prophet was an angel. If he were an angel, he would have appeared in the form of a man with the sole purpose of strengthening the people as they learned from him. But the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* in addition to this, was also a model and example of good behaviour. Such an ideal could not be imparted by angels, who by definition, inhabit a higher plane and whom we, in our limited powers as humans, could not relate to if they commanded us to do something.

Thus, we can say that the Quran did not come to us by means of inspiration to one’s heart, nor from a voice as if speaking from behind a veil. Rather, it came as direct revelation through an intermediary figure, namely the angel Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*. Our Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*

(1) *This Hadith of the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him is correct and agreed upon. Al-Bukhari quotes it for its correctness (4404, 48), as well as Muslim (10-11), from a Hadith narrated by Abu-Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. Ahmad quotes this Hadith as being attributable to the Prophet (9137), from a Hadith of the Prophet narrated by Ibn ‘Umar Allah be pleased with them. (352)*

saw Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* in his true form, as recounted elsewhere: 'And, indeed, he saw it descend a second time by the lote-tree of the farthest limit.' (*an-Najm*: 13-14)

The issue of revelation and learning inspired of the True Lord *Glorified is He* centres upon the notion of people being called and chosen as messengers: '[In His almightiness,] Allah chooses message-bearers from among the angels as well as from among men...' (*al-Hajj*: 75). Indeed, not all angels are selected by Allah to play this role. He sets some of them apart, and then does the same with people who are often taught as messengers by those angels who have been selected to convey revelation. The messengers chosen from among angels and men might both be taught by Allah. As a means of illustrating the point that Allah must have intermediary means of communicating with people, we have talked before about transformers, i.e. devices attached to electrical appliances which allow only the appropriate type of electricity to pass into the appliance. Without transformers, too much electricity would flow into the appliance causing it to blow its circuits. In the same way, humans do not have the capacity for direct contact with Allah which would overwhelm them. Messengers act like transformers, allowing communication from Allah in a way that humans have the capacity to handle. For this reason, the verse under consideration is sealed with the phrase, 'For, verily, He is Exalted, Wise' (*ash-Shura*: 51). This means that Allah is so Exalted to address humankind directly. The word 'Wise' refers to the fact that there is wisdom in whom He chooses to be taught by Allah *Glorified is He* as messengers.

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ وَلَكِن جَعَلْنَاهُ نُورًا نَّهْدِي بِهِ مَن نَّشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا وَإِنَّكَ لَتَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٥٢﴾

So We have revealed a spirit to you [Prophet] by Our command: you knew neither the Scripture nor the faith, but we made it a light, guiding with it whoever We will of Our servants. You give guidance to the straight path [52]
(The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 52)

To begin with, the phrase 'And thus, too...' (*ash-Shura*: 52) refers to the three methods of revelation described in the preceding verse. 'And thus, too,

[O Muhammad,] have We revealed unto thee a life-giving message, [coming] at Our behest...' (*ash-Shura*: 52). Here, the Arabic word for 'life-giving message' (*ruh*) also refers to Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* the bringer of revelation. Allah *Glorified is He* calls Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* a 'life-giving message' just as he called the Quran by the same name, comparing them both to that spirit which the True Lord *Glorified is He* bestows upon humans. He breathes life and energy into people, who were beforehand lifeless vessels of flesh. Indeed, we know that humans were created by Allah out of clay, after which He made man's progeny out of vile water. When a baby forms in its mother's womb, Allah sends down an angel to breathe the spirit of life into the child after 120 days of pregnancy, infusing it with life and causing its limbs to move about. In the same way that this breath or spirit represents life for the body, so too does the Quran represent life for the hearts of men, Hence why Allah *Glorified is He* calls both Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* and the Quran a 'life-giving message,' as we see in Allah's statement, 'O you who have attained to faith! Respond to the call of Allah and The Apostle whenever he calls you unto that which will give you life...' (*al-Anfal*: 24). The True Lord *Glorified is He* addresses the people, who are already alive, in terms of the body and material things. Therefore, He is talking about those things which will give life to their hearts, i.e. values and principles.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* would not give unto His servants a spirit which causes his body parts to move, only to leave him without moral principles or values or a right way to follow. It is out of Allah's favour bestowed upon humankind that He permits us spiritual principles which enliven our hearts and moral compasses since the life of our bodies is temporal and mortal, ending with the final mortality of our physical selves. As for the life-giving principles and values of the right way, they are everlasting. They link our lives here on earth to the Hereafter. It is this life, i.e. the right way of Allah which is intended in the verse, 'O you who have attained to faith! Respond to the call of Allah and The Apostle whenever he calls you unto that which will give you the life...' (*al-Anfal*: 24).

Next, we read, '[Ere this message came unto thee,] you did not know what revelation is, and nor what faith [implies]' (*ash-Shura*: 52). This means

that Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* did not know how to read or write, nor 'what faith [implies]' meaning the details of divine law. As previously noted, illiteracy is considered shameful except in the case of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and his nation, for whom it is an honour. If Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had been a learned man, possessed of the ability to read and write, the people would have claimed that he had written the Quran himself (rather than having it revealed to him). If his nation had been a people of advanced learning and culture, the other peoples would have claimed that Islam was merely a cultural advance (rather than true religion revealed by Allah), and one which Muhammad's people would use to control the world.

However, this is not the case. We catch a glimpse of Muhammad's greatness by what Allah says to him in this verse: 'And thus, too, [O Muhammad,] have We revealed unto you a life-giving message, [coming] at Our behest. [Ere this message came unto thee,] you did not know what revelation is, and nor what faith [implies]' (*ash-Shura*: 52). As another example, there is a story about Caliph Ma'mun⁽¹⁾ who said to a man in need of rebuke, 'You are illiterate.' The man said, 'But sir, the Prophet was also illiterate!' Ma'mun replied, 'In his case it is an honour, but in your case, it is a shame.'⁽²⁾

Hence why, elsewhere in the Quran, the True Lord *Glorified is He* orders His prophet to 'Say, "Had Allah willed it [otherwise], I would not have conveyed

(1) Ma'mun also known as 'Abdullah ibn-Harun Ar-Rashid, the seventh of the 'Abbasid Caliphs in Iraq, and one of the greatest kings of his age in terms of his life, knowledge and vastness of his realm. He was born in the year 170 A.H. and died in 218 A.H. at the age of 49. 'Az-Zirikli's *Great Figures*

(2) In *Itab Al-Kitab*, Ibn Al-'Abar recounts that it was said by Al-Ma'mun that one of the greatest signs of Muhammad's prophet hood, is that Allah revealed His Message to him, which he memorized even though he was illiterate. He knew neither how to write one line of Arabic nor how to read one letter of it, and neither did his family. However, this lack of learning is an honour upon him and his family, just as being learned is an honour for all others. Ma'mun, Commander of the Believers, has a special place alongside the Prophet in the history of Islam, as inheritor of Muhammad's place and follower of that which he prescribed and proscribed. Because of this, similar solemnity as was given to the Prophet was also placed upon Ma'mun. However, he ignored such honorifics and humbled himself, saying, 'Muhammad, you [in your eloquence] have left me behind. If I had the powers of speech which you possess, I would not be concerned about being able to read or write, even if I were illiterate.'

this [divine writ] unto you, nor would He have brought it to your knowledge. Indeed, a whole lifetime have I dwelt among you ere this [revelation came unto me]: will you not, then, use your reason?’” (*Yunus*: 16) It is right that the verse should ask this, since Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* lived among his people before bringing them the message of true religion. Those people with whom he grew up, knew that he was illiterate, knowing neither how to read nor how to write; nor had he produced any oration or poetry before. It is therefore out of foolishness and stubbornness that people accuse the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* of having been taught the Quran by some foreign man. The Quran itself exposes the faulty nature of such claims: ‘[Notwithstanding that] the tongue of him to whom they so maliciously point is wholly outlandish, whereas this is Arabic speech, clear [in itself] and clearly showing the truth [of its source].’ (*an-Nahl*: 103) Thus, we can say that there was nothing new revealed to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the way of language, nothing which did not already exist among humankind. We read, ‘... [Ere this message came unto you,] you did not know what revelation is, nor what faith [implies]: but [now] We have caused this [message] to be a light, whereby We guide whom We will of Our servants...’ (*ash-Shura*: 52). The Arabic word *ja`alnahu* meaning ‘...We have caused this [message]...’ refers to the Quran. The word ‘A light’ (*ash-Shura*: 52) means a radiance or brightness which casts aside the darkness of ignorance and attempts to deny the truth of Allah’s Message. It is this light which guides whomever Allah wishes to the right way making it easier for humans to see the path and walk it, such that nothing could clash against one’s efforts to be true to Allah. In this case, clashing or colliding means that loss or destruction come upon a person. If someone clashes with something stronger than him, then that thing destroys the person; if he collides with something weaker, then he destroys that thing.

Hence what we have said before about leaving a nightlight on as we sleep, which helps us see where to walk if we get up in the middle of the night. This is an example of actual physical light which serves to guide our steps. How much more so with the light of heart and spirit, and the way which illumines our spiritual lives? This is that light which Allah refers to when He says, ‘...For he to whom Allah gives no light, no light whatever has he!’ (*an-Nur*: 40)

As we have said before, people light their homes and workplaces according to their means. One person might light a candle, another person might use electricity, and so on. However, when the sun shines, it covers all other lights with its brightness, as though to say, 'Put out your earthly lights, for the light of Allah has come to you'. Taking this example of physical light a step higher, we can apply it to spiritual light and say that when Allah blessed us with the righteous path, it was as though He were saying, 'Put away your other ways and follow my way. A ruling has come from Allah, so put away your other rulings and opinions and suggestions. There is in the laws of Allah that which makes it so that you have no need of these, your former ways, in the same way that you have no need of lamplight in the noonday sun. You do not need any path other than that given by the True Lord which does away with all other ways and lifestyles'.

As we have mentioned, comparing the physical light which Allah has provided (i.e. the sun) to the light of man makes the difference between them very clear. For example, a person brings out a candle to light it and places a wick on it. That person then lights a match, which, if the wind were to blow, would be snuffed out. In like fashion, electric lamps require tools to build them, as well as transformers to allow the correct amount of electricity. After a month's time, the light bulbs need to be changed; and if too much electric current runs through them, they burn out. In addition, lights created by humans only last as long as human lives. However, the sun lights the entire earth without any replaced parts or maintenance. Moreover, unlike the transient light of humans, sunlight lasts forever, lighting the whole world from before the creation of Adam *peace be upon him* all the way to the Last Hour.

Likewise, there is a difference between different types of spiritual light. We see the ways and laws of man, which are free neither from error nor from negative consequences. Even if a set of laws fits one segment of society, it does not fit with other ones, hence why people resort to changing their laws from time to time. This happens because such laws are temporal, according to the temporality of humankind.

As for divine ways and laws, they are complete and free of error. They take all conditions of human life into account, and serve to guide society in all

times and places. This is because they come from Allah, who is wise as to the condition of His creations and expert in that which helps them and gives value to their lives. Thus, we may say that the True Lord *Glorified is He* would not give humans physical light without also providing them with spiritual light, which is more important and powerful in our lives than physical light. A blind person can still perceive his path with his other four senses, or be led by another person to his destination. However, we see someone who has lost the spiritual light from his life bumping up against life's twists and turns without any sense of direction; such a person ends up losing his way. Moreover, physical light is bound up with its own physicality, and is extinguished with the snuffing out of material existence. Divine light, on the other hand, remains forever, extending from this world into the hereafter, linking all things found on the earth.

For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* explains in the chapter of *an-Nur*: '...Light upon light! Allah guides unto His Light him that wills [to be guided]; and [to this end] Allah propounds parables unto men, since Allah [alone] has Full Knowledge of all things.' (*an-Nur*: 35) In this instance, the phrase '...Light upon light! ...' refers to that divine, guiding light, indicated and evinced by the physical light which aids sight and helps us find our way. Physical light keeps us from getting lost or straying from the path, and it eventually carries us to the peace of the hereafter. This concept of spiritual light as indicated by physical light goes along with the verse which states, '...And [to this end] Allah propounds parables unto men...' (*an-Nur*: 35), i.e. in order to clarify that which might remain hidden to human minds. In other words, physical light is evidence, or a parable, of spiritual light, and the true believer will take what he knows of physical light and apply it to spiritual light.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then clarifies to us the source of this light in the verse which follows: 'In the houses [of worship] which Allah has allowed to be raised so that His name be remembered in them, there [are such as] extol His Limitless Glory at morn and evening' (*an-Nur*: 36). This verse commands those who want spiritual light to seek after it in houses of worship which are the sources of its rays. It also commands them to seek after it in prayer and remembrance of Allah, and in treading that righteous way which Allah has

given us. We see, therefore, that the Quran is a light unto us, one which, when used properly, gives us another light, namely ways of being obedient and putting our religion into practice. The greatest source of this kind of light is, of course, the place of worship, i.e. the mosque. For this reason, when scholars originally sought out the gerundive subject and object of the phrase, 'in the houses [of worship]...' (*an-Nur*: 36), they reasoned that the subject must be the 'light upon light!' (*an-Nur*: 35) It is as if to say that there is light upon light in the houses raised unto Allah, namely mosques. It is in these houses of worship that praise to Allah in the morning is connected to praise of Him in the evening. Those who inhabit, or come to worship, at these buildings are described as '...people...' (*an-Nur*: 37), and rightly so; for who would come to worship Allah therein other than people?

In sum, we may say that the True Lord *Glorified is He* gives us spiritual light as represented by His Righteous Path which we receive through commands regarding what to do and what not to do. It is through this path, this way of conducting ourselves that the matters of our lives are kept on the straight and narrow. However, the moment we neglect or forget this path, or treat its precepts with any laxity, we begin to resist Allah and His commandments. When this happens, new problems and trials beset us according to the manner and degree of our laxity and those immoral actions we commit which are not in accordance with Allah's way. For this reason, we see in the scripture how Allah's messengers have come one after the other with messages that progress through the ages, each one appropriate to a specific time and place, and correcting those errors which existed in society at the time. This is as such, even though all the messages deal with faith and morality, as well as established aspects of religion such as prayer and tithes. After all these messengers came, the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* brought religious pronouncements specific to his people and which provided a remedy for their ills.

Anyone who considers the various messages which have been revealed through the ages will find that they develop according to the development of circumstances in life, as well as the ways in which people try to deal with the trials that confront them. In our day and age, for example, we find only small paths in the countryside, allowing for passage from one field to another. Or

perhaps they are sufficient for a donkey to carry a load across several fields. However, if we wanted to create a path between two towns, we would need to widen it somewhat, in order for one car to be able to pass safely along it. And if we wanted a road between two big cities, it would need to be even larger.

In this manner, we have seen developments in the construction of roads which befit developing needs and circumstances of human society. We can see this, for example, in the Cairo-Alexandria desert road in Egypt, a wide highway which allows the passage of cars along it. It is a two-way road, allowing passage to and from either city, as well as rest stations along the way where travellers can recover from their journey.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks to us about this last matter in the following verse: ‘He it is who has made the earth a cradle for you, and has traced out for you ways [of livelihood] thereon...’ (*Ta Ha*: 53). When the people were desirous to plan out the city of Basra,⁽¹⁾ Caliph ‘Umar told them, ‘Make the path wide enough for two camels carrying packs to pass each other.’ This continues to be the way roads are constructed down to the present day. In the chapter of *Saba*, Allah states: ‘Now [before their downfall,] We had placed between them and the cities which We had blessed [many] towns within sight of one another; and thus, We had made travelling easy [for them, as if to say]: “Travel safely in this [land], by night or by day!”’ (*Saba*: 18) The towns within sight of one another are stations on the long road, rest areas in which people can recover from their journeys and gather whatever provisions they might need. Indeed, a long journey must be divided up into phases, in order for the trip to be relaxing and not too painful. Every time we have motivation and energy, we encounter such journeys, and we therefore find places of rest along the way in order to get proper recovery and breaks from travel.

For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks about those who were harmed and oppressed by wealthy ship owners, to the point where they say, ‘Our Lord, lengthen the distance between our journeys...’ (*Saba*: 19). Why

(1) Basra is a city in Iraq, located in the most southeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, with a population of more than 3.8 million people. It is the one port city which gives Iraq open access to the world via the ocean. In it, there are many different races and sects found among Christians, Syrians, Assyrians, Sabeans, and Muslims.

would they say this when they know that travelling and the distance of travel causes fatigue? The answer is that they are oppressed by the owners of much wealth and many ships, which they do not distribute to others. These wealthy people do not want anyone but themselves to be able to travel, nor for anyone but the rich to have access to means of commercial exchange.

This case points to the fact that religious legal rulings continually progress through time, considering more and more challenges that best humankind. Every time new circumstances or trials appear, the Message of Allah cumulates from one messenger to the next, to the point when the final message, correct and appropriate for all times and places, came to humankind. It is this message that Allah speaks of in the following verse: ‘...Today have I perfected your religious law for you, and have bestowed upon you the full measure of My blessings, and willed that self-surrender unto Me shall be your religion’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 3).

Moving on, we read Allah’s statement ‘...But [now] We have caused this [message] to be a light, whereby We guide whom We will of Our servants: and, verily, [on the strength thereof] you, too, shall guide [men] onto the straight way.’ (*ash-Shura*: 52) The message referred to in this part of the verse is the Quran, which Allah made a light to guide whichever of His servants He wishes. In this way, Allah established guidance through this radiant source of knowledge, revealed in the form of writing with definitive legal ramifications. Allah also established guidance by sending His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and charging him with the mission of making legal rulings regarding matters of religion. The following statement by Allah is evidence of this fact: ‘...Hence, accept [willingly] whatever The Apostle gives you [thereof], and refrain from [demanding] anything that he withholds from you...’ (*al-Hashr*: 7). Guidance which comes from Allah is found in the roots and established matters of religion, as well as that which appears in signs sent to help to remember Allah. Guidance from the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is found in the branches [as opposed to the roots], namely the explanation and clarification of the root foundations of true religion. And if trials beset us, or if we are confronted by problems for which no official ruling has been given, neither in the Quran nor the *Sunna*, then we must gather ourselves together in counsel with one another to settle upon a group opinion,

rather than one which has come only from one individual person. On this point, the following Hadith of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* is relevant: ‘Let not my people gather together unto deviance from the path.’⁽¹⁾ In a similar vein, how beautiful are the words which the poet Shawqi⁽²⁾ has written:

This land is not troubled by the opinion of the majority

Despite all the debate, but individual opinion that may trouble it.⁽³⁾

For this reason, the consensus of the scholars is the third source, after the Quran and *Sunna*, of legislation in matters of true religion. The verse under consideration establishes that Allah has given human beings guidance through The Holy Quran: ‘...But [now] We have caused this [message] to be a light, whereby We guide whom We will of Our servants...’ (*ash-Shura*: 52). This statement refers specifically to the root and foundation of true religion, appearing in texts containing the word of Allah. The verse goes on to establish guidance via the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* in terms of the branches of religion, i.e. detailed clarification and explanation of that which was outlined in Allah’s holy books: ‘...And, verily, [on the strength thereof] you, too, shall guide [men] onto the straight way.’ (*ash-Shura*: 52) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was given the right to make religious rulings for

(1) Abu-Dawud cites this Hadith for its authenticity (3711). He writes, quoting from Abu-Malik Al-Asha’ari: ‘The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said: “Verily Allah protects you from three ills: That your Prophet not invite you to true religion, leaving you to perish; that those who pronounce lies not come upon those who tell the truth and that this people not be gathered together unto deviance from the path.”’ Ibn-Majah also cites this Hadith for its authenticity (3940), as narrated by ‘Anas ibn-Malik, who relates: ‘The Prophet *peace be upon him* said: “O may my people not be gathered together unto deviance from the path. And if I see them contending one with another, the greater darkness be upon them.”’

(2) This line was written by Hafizh Ibrahim and not Ahmad Shawqi. Hafizh Ibrahim was born in 1871 C.E and died in 1932 C.E. He grew up an orphan and began to compose poetry while still in school. He graduated from the Harbiyya Military School in 1891. He is known as the ‘Poet of the Nile’.

(3) This line is from a poem by Hafizh Ibrahim written in the Basit metre and comprising 8 total lines. The first line is as follows: O you who raise high the opinion of the council and defend it,

May the Lord bless and reward abundantly those in support of it!

the people, and for this reason his *Sunna* is the second source of such rulings, after the Quran.

We have said previously that the guidance which comes from the True Lord *Glorified is He* is the guidance of clarity, direction, and conducting along the right way. If we obey Allah, we will merit his guidance of help and success in our lives: '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) The guidance which comes from the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* is that of clarity and conducting only, as we have previously discussed.

Moving on, we read, '...And, verily, [on the strength thereof] you, too, shall guide [men] onto the straight way.' (*ash-Shura*: 52) In other words, the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* shall lead and conduct people along the straight path, that path which leads people to their intended destination the fastest and with the least amount of effort or pain. This is because every time a path becomes more askew or serpentine, it gets harder to traverse. The meaning of 'straight' in the phrase 'straight path' also signifies that it is narrow like a piece of straw or hair. This means that we must walk the path with all due diligence and discipline, straying neither to the left nor to the right. For this reason, Allah says elsewhere in the Quran '... (*sawa` at- tariq*) the right path' (*al-Mumtahana*: 1) [the middle road or the middle of the path] meaning that we walk straight down the centre of the way. Thus, the intended meaning of the phrase 'straight path' is that way which the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* brought. It is that way which accompanies us in this world and helps us to arrange the chaos of our lives. Eventually, if we follow it, this path will grant us our reward in the hereafter, hence why the True Lord *Glorified is He* teaches us of it, calling us to His way, saying: 'Guide us the straightway, the way of those upon whom you have bestowed Your blessings.' (*al-Fatiha*: 6-7) It is:

صِرَاطَ اللَّهِ الَّذِي لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ
 ٥٣
 لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ تَصِيرُ الْأُمُورُ

**The path of God, to whom belongs all that is in
 the heavens and earth: truly everything will
 return to God [53] (The Quran, *ash-Shura*: 53)**

In this verse, the phrase ‘the way that leads to Allah’ (*ash-Shura*: 53) means that path which Allah gives us since He is the original possessor and author of it, rather than people. In other words, Allah’s servants can in no way alter this path. And as long as it is from Allah, it is incumbent upon us to follow it and to take care not to stray from it. After this, the True Lord *Glorified is He* characterizes Himself using the following description: ‘...To whom all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth belongs...’ (*ash-Shura*: 53). This means that the possessor of the straight path also possesses all things in the heavens and the earth, i.e. this mortal world. And it is He alone who causes events on earth to move forward to the next life.

Next, we read, ‘...Oh, verily, with Allah is the beginning and the end of all things!’ (*ash-Shura*: 53) This exemplifies what is known in Arabic as the style of brevity which here emphasizes the fact that only with Allah is the beginning and end of all things, and no one else other than him. The straight path, the way, is placed before us by Allah Who possesses this world and the world to come; and whosoever walks this Righteous Path will not be kept from receiving a great reward in the hereafter. Indeed, the whole world from its beginning is progressing toward a final end, being the hereafter. This end is to Allah alone, and therefore it is upon us to do the best that we can in this state between the beginning of the world and its final destiny in the hereafter. This is because we are all progressing toward the next world, to Allah, and the time we have to perform our labours on earth is limited. However, the period of reward or punishment in the hereafter is eternal. It is a realm in which both misery and joy are found, and things which neither eyes have seen nor ears have heard, nor which have occurred to the mind and heart of man. As the expression goes, whoever proposes to a beautiful woman does not think the value of the dowry is too much for her.

Consider the way in which this verse is sealed at its end: ‘...Oh, verily, with Allah is the beginning and the end of all things!’ (*ash-Shura*: 53) The phrase ‘Oh verily’ (*`ala*) is a vocative tool, alerting the reader or listener to something important and worthy of attention, something we cannot ignore. As noted previously, a speaker knows the points he wants to make and therefore does not need his attention directed to his words. However, the addressee does not know what will be said, and therefore might need to be told to pay attention to important matters. In this instance, the important point worthy of attention is that, ‘...Oh, verily, with Allah is the beginning and the end of all things!’ (*ash-Shura*: 53) This is a flash of insight at the end of a verse containing discussion on many topics. This is similar to how a person on his deathbed might give counsel to his children: he does not go into all the details of his life, but rather the most important lessons he has learned.

Thus, the statement ‘...Oh, verily, with Allah is the beginning and the end of all things!’ (*ash-Shura*: 53) means that we must attend to the fact that the whole matter comes from Allah and returns to Allah. It comes from the way which He has outlined to us, and our fate and destiny will return to Him after this life. We must therefore look at our lives and make them fall in line with this path. We must also know our fate ultimately goes back to Allah’s will, and that our lives are slowly leading back to Him. Allah *Glorified is He* did not create us accidentally, nor will He leave us in vain. This is a reality which should never be far from our thoughts.

the chapter of

az-Zukhruf

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

The chapter of *az-Zukhruf*⁽¹⁾:

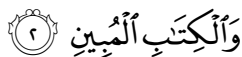


***Ha Mim* [1]**

(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 1)

We have previously discussed the singular letters at the beginning of some of the chapters of the Quran, and that there is a wisdom therein intended by the True Lord *Glorified is He* that we hover around before saying, ‘and Allah knows better what it means’.⁽²⁾

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- (1) The chapter of *az-Zukhruf* is the 43rd chapter and consists of 89 verses. It is, by consensus, a Meccan chapter, as Al- Qurtubi stated in his *Tafsir*. *Zukhruf* means adornment. Ibn-Sayyidih said, ‘*Zukhruf* originally meant gold. The word was then applied to any type of adornment and was subsequently applied to anything plated with it or faked’.
- (2) There is some difference of opinion between the different *Tafsirs* regarding the singular letters that are found at the beginning of some chapters. Of them are those who say that the knowledge of them is the province of Allah alone. Accordingly, they left the knowledge of them with Allah and did not attempt to explain them. This is what Al-Qurtubi narrated in his *Tafsir* of Abu-Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman, ‘Ali, and Ibn-Mas‘ud. ‘Amir Sha‘bi, Sufyan Ath-Thawri and Ar-Rabi’ ibn Khaytham also said it and it was the opinion of Abu-Hatim ibn Habban. There were those who interpreted them, and they differed as to their meaning. ‘Abd Ar-Rahman ibn-Zayd ibn Aslam said that they were the names of the chapters. It was also said that they are from amongst the names of Allah. Ibn-Kathir said in his *Tafsir*, ‘All of the letters that are mentioned at the beginnings of the chapters, not including the repetitions, total 14 letters: *alif, lam, mim, sad, ra, kaf, ha, ya, ‘ayn, ta, sin, ha, qaf* and *nun*. These all can be encompassed in: ‘*Nass hakim qati’’ lahu sirr.*’ (1/37)



**By the Scripture that makes things clear [2]
(The Quran, az-Zukhruf: 2)**

The word ‘and’ at the beginning of this verse is a conjunction and it means that ‘Ha. Mim.’ and ‘And the Clear Book’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 1-2) are as one. They are both Quran by which Allah is swearing, but He has separated them with a conjunction. This is because we read ‘Ha. Mim’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 1), and we have faith in it, but we do not know its meaning; rather, we relinquish such to its Speaker *Glorified is He*. ‘And the Clear Book’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 2), however, is clear, as it says, and thus we understand and know its meaning.



**We have made it a Quran in Arabic so that you [people]
may understand [3] (The Quran, az-Zukhruf: 3)**

This is what is sworn to. The True Lord *Glorified is He* swears by these Arabic letters and by the divine writ made up from them that He has made it ‘...a discourse in the Arabic tongue, so that you might encompass it with your reason’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 3). He named it a ‘Book’ because it has been written down, and He named it a ‘discourse’ (*Quran*) because it is something spoken. He described it as Arabic to emphasise the fact that it has been revealed in the language of the people around The Messenger, just as Allah *Glorified is He* said, ‘And never have We sent forth any apostle otherwise than [with a message] in his own people’s tongue...’ (*Ibrahim*: 4).

Thus, we can see that a messenger must speak the language of his people so that they can understand him and the delivery of the message may be fulfilled. If one were to say, ‘But how is it then that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to all mankind with all their different languages?’, we say that he was sent with the language of the people who were his contemporaries, those who experienced his teachings first-hand. When they had understood, were satisfied with, and put faith in the truthfulness of them, they took them to the other nations, roaming the earth applying them in their works, actions and behaviour.

This is the meaning of being sent to all mankind. The miraculous thing about this is the standard of conduct and its practical application. History tells

us that Islam spread through the lands with upright conduct that dazzled mankind and they consequently entered the religion of Allah in droves. Thus read, ‘And who could be better of speech than he who calls [his fellow-men] unto Allah, and does what is just and right, and says, “Verily, I am of those who have surrendered themselves to Allah?”’ (*Fussilat*: 33) And Allah *Glorified is He* says of this nation, ‘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). This is how the successors were given the responsibility of carrying this message. The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* testifies that he has delivered the message to us, and the other nations testify that we have delivered it to them.

So, by means of language this nation understood this methodology and they translated it into action. They were transformed from an ignorant, illiterate nation with no system or law into an exemplary nation that drew in the most sophisticated nations of the world such as the Persians in the east and the Byzantine Romans in the west. When they applied the teachings of the methodology brought by Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they shook the foundations of these two civilisations, and it was this that drew eyes to Islam.

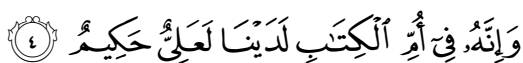
If we look at the chapter of *Yusuf*, we find this same pattern of applied faith: ‘Now two young men happened to go to prison at the same time as Yusuf (Joseph). One of them said: “Behold, I saw myself [in a dream] pressing wine.” And the other said: “Behold, I saw myself [in a dream] carrying bread on my head, and birds were eating thereof.” [And both entreated Yusuf (Joseph):] “Let us know the real meaning of this! Verily, we see that you are one of those who have attained excellence.”’ (*Yusuf*: 36)

Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* had reached a rank such that he was trusted by these two questioners, but why? Because he had realised the state of excellence; the pinnacle in application of the methodology he brought. He proceeds to clarify the course of action that has brought him to the level of interpreting dreams. ‘[Yusuf (Joseph)] answered: “Ere there comes unto you the meal which you are [daily] fed, I shall have informed you of the real meaning of your dreams, [so that you might know what is to come] before it comes unto you: for this is [part] of the knowledge which my Lord has

imparted to me. Behold, I have left behind me the ways of people who do not believe in Allah, and who persistently refuse to acknowledge the Hereafter; and I follow the creed of my forefathers Ibrahim (Abraham), Ishaq (Isaac), and Ya`qub (Jacob). It is not conceivable that we should [be allowed to] ascribe divinity to aught beside Allah: this is [an outcome] of Allah's bounty unto us and unto all mankind – but most people are ungrateful.” (Yusuf: 37-38) That is to say, ‘if you do as I have, you will be able to understand and interpret dreams just as I do’.

This path of action is precisely what made Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* seize the opportunity to fulfil his duty of proselytising. Hence, before he gave the two questioners what they wanted, he first gave them what he desired in terms of calling them to Allah, for they were in need of it, at the time, to listen to every word that he would say. For this reason, we see him hasten with this conclusive parable of faith: ‘O my companions in imprisonment! Which is more reasonable: [belief in the existence of numerous divine] lords, each of them different from the other – or [in] Allah, The One, The All-Dominant, who holds absolute sway over all that exists? All that you worship instead of Allah is nothing but [empty] names which you have invented – you and your forefathers – [and] for which Allah has bestowed no warrant from on high. Judgment [as to what is right and what is wrong] rests with Allah alone – [and] He has ordained that you should worship nought but Him: this is the [one] ever-true religion; but most people know it not.’ (Yusuf: 39-40) It is only after this that he interprets the dream for them.

So, it was the behaviour of Yusuf (Joseph) which drew eyes toward him. And so, it is in every time and place, that true, upright behaviour draws eyes and attracts hearts towards one.



**It is truly exalted in the Source of Scripture kept with Us,
and full of wisdom [4] (The Quran, az-Zukhruf: 4)**

His saying, ‘...And, verily...it...’ (az-Zukhruf: 4) refers to the Clear Book that was previously described, i.e. the Bounteous Quran. ‘...In the essence...of the Book’ (az-Zukhruf: 4) refers to the Preserved Tablet or the original book

from which all heavenly revelations come and in which all events are pre-recorded. ‘With Us’, i.e. with Allah. This means it has been given to no one else and is therefore protected and preserved.

‘...It is indeed sublime...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 4), that is, in and of itself. Sublimity is exaltedness. This is because it is the Book that completes all the revelations before it and is a guardian over them. The guardianship of the Quran over the other books is that it agrees with them in the fundamentals of belief, action, worship, and character, but it abrogates the parts of those revelations which are inappropriate to this age. It also dissociates from them the corruption that accrued to them of distortion, alteration, and substitution.

The Quran says of them that they forgot a portion of that which they had been reminded of, and that what they did not forget they concealed, and that what they did not conceal they altered. Indeed, they did more than even that, not stopping at the point of altering the text, they brought speech of their own and said, and ‘This is from Allah.’ Read His saying, ‘Woe, then, unto those who write down, with their own hands, [something which they claim to be of] the Book, and then say, “This is from Allah...”’ (*al-Baqara*: 79). This is how the Quran is the guardian of the books that preceded it, and is raised above them.

As for His saying, ‘...full of wisdom...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 4), the wise one is he who puts things in the right place at the right time so that you see everything in perfect order. The Quran is the Book which has completed the heavenly revelations and Muhammad *peace be upon him* is the Final Messenger.

If one were to say, ‘Why does The True Lord *Glorified is He* record His Speech in the Essence of the Book when Allah *Glorified is He* never forgets nor errs, has knowledge of all things and nothing is hidden from Him’? It would be said that Allah *the Exalted* has recorded His Speech in the Essences of the Book for the angels. When they look at the Preserved Tablet, they find therein ancient speech that corresponds to the events and situations of mankind in creation, and that current events occur just as the True Lord stated in His Speech. As a result, they increase in love for Allah and in regard for Him, and they judge that indeed Allah is the All Knowing, the Wise. This is the secret behind this writing because it happened that when the angels were asking

about the creation of man, 'They asked: "Will You place on it⁽¹⁾ such as will spread corruption thereon and shed blood – whereas it is we who extol Your Limitless Glory, and praise You, and hallow Your name?" [Allah] answered: "Verily, I know that which you do not know." (*al-Baqara*: 30)

Some of the scholars said in reference to '...The Essence... of the Book...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 4), that it is not the same as the Preserved Tablet because of His saying about the Quran: '...containing verses that are clear in and by themselves (*muhkamat*) – and these are the essence of the Book – as well as others that are allegorical (*mutashabihat*).' (*Al- 'Imran*: 7)

So 'the essence of the Book' refers here to the clear verses of the Quran. Taking this meaning into consideration, there may be an indication to us that the chapter of *az-Zukhruf* is from amongst the clear verses and that not one allegorical verse is to be found within it.

The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* has clarified the rulings concerning the clear and the allegorical verses. He said, 'What you know of them, act according to it and what you do not know of them have faith in it.'⁽²⁾

Allah *the Exalted* said regarding the allegorical verses '...but none save Allah knows its final meaning...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 7), [then we pause] then, '...Hence, those who are deeply rooted in knowledge say, "We believe in it..."' (*Al- 'Imran*: 7). Hence we act according to the clear verses and we have faith in the allegorical ones.

(1) Some non-Muslims who have fallen into the temptation of attacking the Quran say, 'How can the angels address Allah with such a question; disapproving of His creation of Adam and making him His vicegerent on Earth'? But the angels' question is not one of opposition, or out of envy for mankind. Allah has described them saying that their speech does not precede Him; they do not ask Him anything except that he has given them permission. Their question is rather one of inquiry and looking for the wisdom in this matter. 'Adil Abu Al Ma`ati

(2) *Al-Harith relates in Al-Bughya (18 Hadiths) via 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn Al- 'As that the Prophet said, 'O people! Do not dispute with the Quran, for those who went before you only went astray through their argumentation. Indeed the Quran did not come down so that one part might contradict another; rather, it came down so that each part would confirm the other. Thus, that which is from its clear verses (muhkamihi) act according to it, and that which is from its allegorical verses (mutashabihhi) have faith in it.' It is also like this in Al-Ahad Wa Al-Mathani by Ibn Abu 'Asim (749).*

أَفَنَضْرِبُ عَنْكُمُ الذِّكْرَ صَفْحًا أَن كُنتُمْ قَوْمًا مُّسْرِفِينَ ﴿٥﴾

**Should We ignore you and turn this revelation
away from you because you are insolent people? [5]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 5)**

The letter hamza at the beginning of this verse carries the meaning of an incredulous question. ‘Should We, perchance, withdraw...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 5): we say ‘*darabtu `an al-`amal*’ and ‘*adrabtu `an al-`amal*’ meaning ‘I left the work’ or ‘I refrained from working’. We also say ‘*adraba al-`ummal `an al-`amal*’ meaning ‘the workers went on strike’.

So, the True Lord is saying to them, ‘should we leave off reminding you and turn away from you and leave you as you are neglected, just because you neglected yourselves and denied the reminder and disbelieved in it? Certainly not! We shall continue to address and remind you, and We shall establish for you Our evidence and proof’.

If you belie to the evidence and disbelieve then the turn of conflict will come, then conquest and victory over you, until you believe. This is mercy from Allah because they are His creation and His slaves and he desires salvation for them. He is more merciful to them than a mother with her child, even though they disbelieve in Him.

If He left them to themselves, they would persist in their corruption and thus deserve punishment and destruction. Allah has mercy on the disbeliever when he comes to believe by means of his faith, and He has mercy on the society by relieving it of the corruption and evil that would have come from him had he maintained his disbelief. ‘The reminder’ here then is revelation and this is a mercy from Allah that bestows upon to His slaves out of compassion for them.

For this reason they say, ‘If you have an enemy, do not pray for his destruction, rather only pray for his guidance, for you do not benefit from his destruction, only from his behaviour and, if he is guided, his goodness will come back to you’. The fruits of goodness return upon the whole society, and it is because of this that Islam forbids us to conceal knowledge. When one conceals knowledge, he deprives society of its benefit, whereas when one teaches another, one benefits from his goodness, and is saved from his evil.

Thus, it is from Allah's Mercy to them that He continues to send down the Quran to them despite their persistence in error, stubbornness, and disbelief. This was borne out when, with the continuity of revelation and the passing of time, notorious disbelievers entered Islam one after another, 'Umar, 'Amr, Khalid, 'Ikrima Allah be pleased with them and many others.

The True Lord then says to the disbelievers, 'You need to read history, take a lesson from the procession of revelations, and see the outcome of those who denied the Messengers'. The history of revelation affirms the victory of Allah's messengers over those who deny them because this is Allah's way regarding the messengers. He makes them victorious in the end, and the final outcome is in their favour while Allah deals with the disbelievers in accordance with their denial; 'For every one of them did We take to task for his sin...' (*al-Qasas*: 40).

The True Lord *Glorified is He* had previously addressed them with His saying, '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) So this issue is not just hypothetical speech, it is a witnessed, lived reality. It is upon you to ponder it and learn its lesson so that the punishment might not befall you as it befell them.

وَكَمْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ نَبِيِّ فِي الْأَوَّلِينَ
وَمَا يَأْنِيهِمْ مَنْ نَبِيِّ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ

**We have sent many a prophet to earlier people [6]
and they mocked every one of them [7]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 6 - 7)**

'How many' (*kam*) here means that it was a large number.⁽¹⁾ '...To those of old...' refers to those previous nations which belied the messengers and mocked them.

(1) *Kam* has two possible meanings: one is predicative meaning 'a great number'; the other is as a question meaning 'what number?' Here it is predicative and affords the meaning of a large number. Allah *the Exalted* says in the chapter of *an-Nisa*, 'And as [We inspired other] apostles whom We have mentioned to you ere this, as well as apostles whom We have not mentioned to you...' (*an-Nisa*: 164).

فَأَهْلَكْنَا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ بَطْشًا وَمَضَىٰ مَثَلُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٨﴾

**So We have destroyed mightier people than [the disbelievers of Mecca] and their example has gone down in history[8]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 8)**

This is saying, ‘O disbelievers of Quraysh! Take the admonition of the previous nations, and those whom Allah destroyed. They were more powerful than you were, but their strength did not protect them from Allah’s punishment. ‘...And the [very] image of those people of old became a thing of the past.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 8) That is, their story and what befell them since that was Allah’s promise to His messengers.

‘For, long ago has Our word gone forth unto Our servants, the messengers, that, verily, they – they indeed – would be succoured, and that, verily, Our hosts – they indeed – would [in the end] be victorious!’ (*as-Saffat*: 171-173)

So, you will necessarily meet the consequences of your disbelief. Either you will be routed in this world, or your punishment will be stored up for you in the Hereafter.

وَلَيْن سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ خَلَقَهُنَّ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٩﴾
الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ فِيهَا سُبُلًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

If you [Prophet] ask them, ‘Who created the heavens and earth?’ they are sure to say, ‘They were created by the Almighty, the All Knowing’ [9] It is He who smoothed out the earth for you and traced out routes on it for you to find your way [10] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 9 - 10)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to clarify for the disbelievers that they deny the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and oppose his message out of mere arrogance and obstinacy, not relying therein upon logic or wisdom. He confirms this reality from their own tongues, ‘Yet thus it is [with most people]: if you ask them, “Who is it that has created the heavens and the earth?” – They will surely answer, “The Almighty, The All Knowing has created them.”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 9), and in another place, ‘Now if you ask those

[who worship any being other than Allah] as to who it is that has created them, they are sure to answer, "Allah." (az-Zukhruf: 87) Thus, they do not deny this reality, but rather openly admit it, because nobody would claim the affair of creation for himself and argue for it.

Firstly, it is very strange that, despite believing that Allah is the Creator and that He is the Almighty, the All Knowing, they take this obstinate stance regarding the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. Next, why did they not say, for example, 'Allah created them', when no one would dispute this? Instead, they described the True Lord as 'the Almighty, the All Knowing'. The scholars say this is because they followed the way of their forefathers, believing it to be superior, saying, '...Nay, we shall follow [only] that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing...' (al-Baqara: 170), and it was this that prevented them from adopting the truth.

'...The Almighty...' (az-Zukhruf: 9) is the one who dominates all and cannot be dominated, and with this they have refuted their own selves; for no matter what they do, they must necessarily be defeated.

Their description of the True Lord *Glorified is He* as '...the Almighty, the All-Knowing...' (az-Zukhruf: 9) is possible because a speaker can always add from himself that which he was not told. For example, one could send an envoy with a message saying to him, 'Go to so-and-so and tell him such-and-such' just like that with no names or descriptions. Then when the messenger arrives he says, 'By Allah, so-and-so said to me, "go to *sheikh* so-and-so, or professor so-and-so, and tell him such-and-such."' He has added a description of his own accord, and so it is that the disbelievers say, '...the Almighty, the All Knowing has created them' (az-Zukhruf: 9) because they know that Allah is Almighty and All Knowing.

At this point Allah *Glorified is He* chooses to elaborate for them on His Power and Knowledge saying, 'He it is who has made the earth a cradle for you...' (az-Zukhruf: 10); *al-mahd* (a cradle) is bed that has been *mumahhad* (spread) for a child to rest in, whether sitting or lying down. From the same root, we say 'a paved road' (*tariq mumahhad*), that is to say it has been levelled and prepared so that whoever travels upon it can do so with ease. The True Lord likens us here to children, for the child is unable to spread its own

bed and, had Allah not spread out the earth for us, we would have been unable to do it.

‘...And has provided for you paths thereon...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 10), i.e. paths upon which you can travel from one place to another. This is because the needs of the creation require movement between their residences and their places of business. ‘...So that you might follow the right path’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 10), i.e. in your movements to your business

When The True Lord *Glorified is He* reminds them of some of His blessings upon them, it is only to soften their hearts and draw them towards Him so that they might believe in his message, have faith in Him and be guided to Him.

وَالَّذِي نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً يَقْدَرُ فَأَنْشَرْنَا بِهِ بَلْدَةً مَيِّتًا كَذَلِكَ تُخْرَجُونَ ﴿١١﴾

**Who sends water down from the sky in due measure — We
resurrect dead land with it, and likewise you will be
resurrected from the grave [11] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 11)**

As for His saying, ‘...from the sky...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 11), it means ‘from the direction of the sky’ ‘...in due measure...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 11), i.e. a limited amount and a certain quantity according to Allah’s decree. So He is saying, ‘We do this to benefit you with this water and give life to the earth without causing disruption’. This is because water can be a means of destruction as we saw in the story of Nuh (Noah). Thus, He qualified the sending of the water by His saying, ‘...in due measure...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 11), i.e. in accordance with your needs and what is good for you. In this vein, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us to say during rain, ‘O Allah! Around us and not upon us! O Allah! On the hills and on the mountains, the roots and the knolls, in the valleys and the bases of the trees.’

The meaning of, ‘...and [as] We raise therewith dead land to life...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 11) is ‘We brought it to life with plants’, as Allah *Glorified is He* said in another place, ‘And [if, O man, you are still in doubt as to resurrection, consider this:] you can see the earth dry and lifeless – and [suddenly,] when We send down waters upon it, it stirs and swells and puts forth every kind of lovely plant!’ (*al-Hajj*: 5) So, dead land is that which has no plant-life in it.

We find in the books of *fiqh* (law) 'the chapter of bringing life to dead land'. In the Noble Hadith the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Whosoever brings dead land to life, then it is his.'⁽¹⁾

This is a principle which were the nations of the world to apply would eliminate poverty and spread abundance all over the world. We would not find a hand span's worth of desert. We have, in Egypt, a clear example of this. When the government clamped down on the people and forbade them from spreading out into the desert, they crowded together in the Nile valley and delta. They were subsequently struck by poverty and were unable to achieve self-sufficiency from their harvests. But when the government permitted the cultivation of the desert and encouraged it, what happened? We saw the desert turn green and produce fine and delicious fruit and vegetables, and whoever goes along the desert roads will see the proof.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* has explained that the water comes down from the sky and mankind benefits from it in their agriculture, and what is in excess of their needs, the earth absorbs it and streams form under the earth's surface. Allah says, 'Are you not aware that it is Allah who sends down water from the skies, and then causes it to travel through the earth in the shape of springs...?' (*az-Zumar*: 21)

The word 'dead' (*mayta*) is with a stop (*sukun*) on the letter *ya* meaning 'that which has physically died'. As for 'insensible' (*mayyit*), with a doubled *ya*, this means 'that which is considered to be dead' even though it may only be on death's door.

You ask me to explain the dead, the insensible,

Another has expounded, if you can take it in:

(1) *Abu-Dawud related it in his Sunnan [2672] on the authority of 'Urwa who said, 'I testify that the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him ruled that the earth is Allah's earth, the slaves are Allah's slaves, and that whoever brings dead land to life, then it is his by right.' The ones who brought us this from the Prophet are the same ones who brought us the prayer (saltwater). At-Tabarani related in Al-Mu`jam As-Saghir [15217] on the authority of Fadalah Ibn 'Ubayd who said, 'He peace be upon him said, 'The earth is Allah's earth, the slaves are Allah's slaves, and whoever brings dead land to life, then it is his.'*

The one with a soul, that one is insensible,

But the dead one is taken away to his coffin.

Another example of this is Allah's saying to His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Yet, verily, you are bound to die, [O Muhammad,] and, verily, they, too, are bound to die' (*az-Zumar*: 30).

Another poet⁽¹⁾ said in praise of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*:

Your brother 'Isa (Jesus) hailed a dead man, who stood up for him,

But you, you brought generations to life from oblivion.⁽²⁾

As for His saying, '...even thus will you be brought forth [from the dead]'
(*az-Zukhruf*: 11), it means that 'Just as We bring the dead earth to life, so we shall resurrect you from your graves. So, take what you can see on earth as an indication of what is hidden from you regarding the matters of the resurrection, and believe Us when We tell you that Allah will bring you back to life after your death'.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَالَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ الْفُلْكِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مَا تَرْكَبُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

Who created every kind of thing, who gave you ships and animals to ride on [12] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 12)

The Arabic word *azwaj* (opposites) is the plural of the word *zawj*. We previously explained that a *zawj* is every member of a complementary pair such as each colour in the duality of white and black colours, each taste in the complementary pairs of sweet and sour tastes, the upward direction as opposed to the downward direction and the right side as opposed to the left side.

(1) Ahmad Shawqi, the most famous poet of the modern age, a prince among poets. He was born and died in Cairo (1868-1932) and grew up under the care of the royal family. He was sent to France in 1887 to continue his study of law. He mastered most of the branches of poetry including: praise, adoration, eulogy, and description.

(2) This verse is from a poem by Ahmad Shawqi entitled *Nahj Al-Burdah*, following *Al-Bahr Al-Basit*. It has 190 verses of which this is number 116. It begins *rim `ala al-qa` bayn al-ban wa al-`alam*.

Allah *Glorified is He* informs us that He uses the concept of duality in the creation of everything. He says, 'and in everything have We created opposites (*zawjayn*) so that you might bear in mind (that Allah alone is one)' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 49). We need to notice that Allah *Glorified is He* uses the word *kulaha* (all the opposites) in this verse. This reference to 'everything' includes all the objects in creation that we know about, as well as other objects that we do not know about. It is a reference to all the occurrences of opposites in nature, whether we have knowledge about them or are ignorant of their existence.

The people of contemplation and deep thought still find more wisdom in this verse, in which Allah *Glorified is He* describes His Gracious Bounty in creating the concept of duality. The concept of duality clearly demonstrates the contrasting concept of singularity, in which Allah *Glorified is He* is the only Unique Power, and no other power can be compared to Him or be complementary to His Power. A pair in a duality is represented by an even number that is evenly divisible or can be equally divided by the number two. Therefore, the production of a pair of complementary forces requires the presence of two distinct single forces first. In other words, the number two is dependent upon the number one, or the singularity identified by the number one, whereas the number one itself is independent of any other number.

Therefore, this concept can illustrate that Allah *Glorified is He* is the True One Deity, as He does not need any other power, and this attribute of singularity only truly belongs to Him. Allah *Glorified is He* says that He created all forms of duality and pairs, so, when all these pairs are in need of the singularity, the singularity is in no need of a partner. Therefore, as Allah *Glorified is He* is the Creator of duality, He is the Singular Source of Power, who has no likeness in existence.

The one who reflects upon this concept will find that the two halves of a pair, such as the male and the female, are different in some attributes. Each member has its own features that distinguish it from its counterpart, which means that each member lacks important features, and thus, it needs these features in its counterpart. On the other hand, there are common features in both individuals of the pair, and this means that each of them has a likeness in creation.

Allah *Glorified is He* however, is Absolutely Complete. He does not have any deficiency and is Unique in that there is no Power like Him. Therefore, it

is as though this verse illustrated the way in which Allah *Glorified is He* is the Unique Creator Who needs no other power. Whereas the members of all the pairs in existence show continuous need due to their complementary deficiencies with their counterparts, all the forms of creation ultimately show their need to Allah *Glorified is He* who is One.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘and it is He Who has provided for you all those ships and animals which you can ride’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 12). The word *fulk* refers to boats. The animals which are ridden include, for instance, camels and other similar animals of burden. Allah *Glorified is He* says in another chapter: ‘And they carry your loads to (many) a place which (otherwise) you would be unable to reach without great hardship to yourselves’ (*an-Nahl*: 7).

Notice that Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...which you ride (*ma tarkabun*)’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 12), instead of saying, ‘...you ride on them’ (*ma tarkabunaha*) in order to include the ships with the beasts of burden. This is because we do not ride boats (*tarkabuha*), but rather, ride in them (*tarkabu feeha*). For this reason, He called these ships: ‘...the ships filled with cargo (*al-fulk al-mashhoon*)’ (*as-Saffat*: 140). He also says, ‘and (behold what happens) when you go to sea in ships’ (*Yunus*: 22).

Thus, we ride on the backs of animals but we ride inside boats. Even the older ancient boats had sides and seats inside them. The meaning is made clearer when we look at the larger modern ships that are several storeys high and resemble houses. The Quran described them as being like mountains.

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the beasts of burden first and then included the boats with them. There must be a reason for this preference, as every divine word is precisely chosen and perfectly placed. He gives preference to them saying, ‘which you can ride,’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 12) because, as we said, we ride beasts of burden but mostly ride within boats. Another reason is that the beasts of burden are Allah’s direct creation, whereas boats are made by men. Furthermore, Allah *Glorified is He* was, at first, addressing the Arabs with this verse, and the Arabs did not frequently ride in boats and, thus, had no extensive experience with them. Their primary means with which they transported themselves and their burdens was animals, and this is what they had more knowledge about. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَسْتَوْا عَلَى ظُهُورِهِ ثُمَّ تَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ رَبِّكُمْ إِذَا اسْتَوَيْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ وَتَقُولُوا سُبْحَنَ
الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَإِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

So that you may remember your Lord's grace when you are seated on them and say, 'Glory be to Him who has given us control over this; we could not have done it by ourselves [13] Truly it is to our Lord that we are returning [14] (The Quran, az-Zukhruf: 13-14)

Allah *Glorified is He* says in this verse: 'In order that you might gain mastery over them' (az-Zukhruf: 13). Mastery (*al-istiwa*) implies gaining control over something while being at rest and at ease. Human beings used to undergo the troubles of travelling on foot, but now, they ride upon animals that are submissive to them. Consequently, Allah *Glorified is He* orders us to remember that this is from His blessings, and that these blessings necessitate gratitude and remembrance. He warned us from forgetting the One Who bestowed these blessings *Glorified is He*.

An animal carries its burdens on four legs and may kneel for you so that you can mount it easily. A boat needs three things to function properly: the body of the boat itself, the sea upon which to sail, and the wind to propel it forward. Therefore, when you start moving using either of them, you should remember all these blessings that have come together to take you where you desire. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* taught us the appropriate prayer of remembrance for this blessing. We should say, as it has come to us in the Quran: 'Limitless in His Glory is He who has made (all) this subservient to our use – since (but for Him,) we would not have been able to attain it.' (az-Zukhruf: 13)

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us prayers for mounting such modes of transport and for travelling⁽¹⁾, just as he taught us to

(1) When he desired to travel, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would say upon putting his foot in the stirrup, 'In the Name of Allah! O Allah, You are our travel companion and the One Who stays behind with our family. O Allah, contract the earth for us and ease our travel. O Allah, I seek refuge with You from the hardships of travel or distress upon arrival, and from a bad view of my family or wealth.' This was related by Malik in the *Muwatta* as an instruction.

remember Allah *Glorified is He* every time we start a new action. Allah *Glorified is He* says in the story of the Ark, 'In the name of Allah, be its movement and its settling' (*Hud*: 41). The remembrance of Allah *Glorified is He* is the strength by which we seek sustenance and the power to travel or perform our duties.

So, when you say the prayer for mounting a means of transport and declare that, 'Limitless in His Glory is He who has made (all) this subservient to our use, since (without Him,) we would not have been able to attain it' ⁽¹⁾, you negate any delusion of strength in yourself. In this prayer, you are admitting that you do not mount this transport by your own power, but rather, by the power of Allah *Glorified is He* who has made it subservient to you.

Had Allah *Glorified is He* not done so, you would not have been able to control or mount it. Indeed, a boat could easily sink with everyone in it, while an animal could die in the middle of one's journey. Therefore, always remember the power of Allah *Glorified is He* and hasten to remember Him when mounting any means of transport.

Furthermore, these animals that you ride and burden with your loads do not owe you anything. Allah *Glorified is He* taught Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* how to build the Ark, and taught men how to build their boats. Otherwise, men would not have known it. 'We carried him [Nuh (Noah)] on that (vessel) made of (mere) planks and nails' (*al-Qamar*: 13). Allah *Glorified is He* says to Prophet Nuh (Noah): 'But build, under Our eyes and according to Our inspiration, the Ark' (*Hud*: 37). Thus, the inspiration first came from Allah *Glorified is He*.

The horses you ride and the camels that bear your burdens are stronger than you. Indeed, if they were to resist ⁽²⁾ you, you would be unable to compel them. Allah *Glorified is He* says regarding these beasts: 'Are they, then, not aware that it is for them that We have created, among all the things which Our hands have wrought, the domestic animals of which they are (now) masters?

(1) *It was related by Muslim in his Sahih (2392), by Abu Dawud in his Sunnan (2232), by At-Tirmidhi in his Sunnan (3369) and Ahmad in his Musnad (6029, 6086), all on the authority of Ibn 'Umar.*

(2) *Harunat Ad-Daba Wa Hiya Harun.* This refers to the animal that refuses to move when prompted and it only applies to animals with hooves. As for camels, one says '*Al-Lijan*' or '*Al-Khila*'.

And that We have subjected them to men's will so that some of them they may use for riding and of some they may eat' (*Ya Sin*: 71-72). So, if Allah *Glorified is He* had not made them subservient to us, we would have been powerless to do so.

We have previously said that a small child can lead a camel, ride it, and make it kneel, and that a camel will obey it without resistance. Clear insight bids you to ponder the strength of Allah *Glorified is He* which has made this huge creature subservient to a small, powerless child. On the other hand, you may find that a mosquito, for example, can attack your bed and perturb you all night long, leaving you powerless and unable to do anything about it. This is because the Creator *Glorified is He* has made the stronger camel subservient to you, but did not create this insect to serve you. So reflect, and do not think that you ride these means of transport by some power of your own.

The saying: '...we would not have been able to attain it' (*az-Zukhruf*: 13) refers to power or dominance. It means that we have no power or control of our own. It was only Allah *Glorified is He* who made it subservient. 'Hence, verily, to our Lord we must always return' (*az-Zukhruf*: 14).

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَجَعَلُوا لَهُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ جُزْءًا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَكَفُورٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٥﴾

**Yet they assign some of His own servants to Him
as offspring! Man is clearly ungrateful! [15]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 15)**

The 'part' (*juz`*) that some people attributed to Allah *Glorified is He* is a reference to those who attributed a child to Him such as those who claimed that Prophet `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was the son of Allah, while indeed Allah is transcendently *Glorified* above such claims. Allah *Glorified is He* says that these people attributed a 'part' (*juz`*) to him because a child is part of his father. Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* said in a Noble Hadith, 'Fatima is a part of me.'⁽¹⁾

(1) *Al-Bukhari related in his Sahih (3437, 3450, 3483, 4829). Muslim related in his Sahih as well (4482, 4483). This Hadith has come in many variants: 'Fatima is a piece of me, =*

Sometimes, these fabricators claimed that the part (child) was Allah's son, and at other times they claimed that the child was Allah *Glorified is He* Himself. Still, at other times they considered the son as the third of three deities. It is astounding that they made this error regarding Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* who Allah *Glorified is He* had sent to guide them to true faith. They made 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* himself a means of associating partners with Allah *Glorified is He* and committing *shirk* (polytheism).

Some Arabs also claimed that a part of creation was a part of Allah *Glorified is He*. It is well known that the Arabs incorrectly held the male to be nobler and preferable than the female. The proof of this is Allah's saying, '...for whenever any of them is given the glad tiding of (the birth of) a girl, his face darkens, and he is filled with suppressed anger, avoiding all people because of the tiding which he has received, (and debating within himself:) Shall he keep this (child) despite the contempt (which he feels for it) – or shall he bury it in the dust? Oh, evil indeed is whatever they decide!' (*an-Nahl*: 58-59)

Although they could have attributed either a male or a female as offspring to Allah *Glorified is He* and although they themselves preferred males than females, they still attributed to Allah *Glorified is He* female daughters.

Perhaps you have heard the story ⁽¹⁾ of Abu Hamza. He was married to a woman who would not bear him a son, so he left her for another woman. She spoke her mind and said ⁽²⁾,

What is with Abu Hamza, he comes not to us,
 Remaining in the house adjacent to ours,
 Angry that we bear not for him boys,
 By Allah, that matter is not of our choice,

= so whosoever makes her angry, makes me angry'; 'Fatima is indeed a piece of me, and I hate anything to harm her' and 'Fatima! She is a piece of me, whatsoever troubles her troubles me, and it harms me that which harms her.'

(1) The story of Abu Hamza with his wife who only begot him daughters

(2) She was the wife of Abu Hamza Ad-Dabbi, an Abbasid poetess. Her husband left her after she bore him a daughter. One day, he was passing by her quarters when he heard some lines of poetry, at which he took pity on her and made up to her.

We are like the earth to its farmer who sows,

We bear just what' is sowed within us.⁽¹⁾

This Arabian lady of older times described what has been proven by modern science. Indeed, the woman is not accountable for the gender of the child, but rather, is a noble vessel and a caretaker. It is the man's gamete that determines the matter of gender in the zygote.

Allah says, 'And that it is He who created the two kinds - the male and the female - out of a (mere) drop of sperm as it is poured forth' (*an-Najm*: 45-46). The drop of fluid is the man's semen that penetrates the ovum and determines the gender.

The attribution of a child to Allah *Glorified is He* is a greatly heinous affair. Therefore, this verse we are studying is concluded by Allah's saying, 'Verily, most obviously bereft of all gratitude is man!' (*az-Zukhruf*: 15) We should reflect upon the precise articulation here, which reflects the loathsome nature of their assertion. The word: 'Verily (*Inna*)' is a particle of emphasis, and 'bereft of all gratitude (*la-kafir*)' is the emphatic form of *kafir* (ingrate disbeliever). The word 'most obviously (*mubeen*)' means that the disbelievers are clearly ungrateful and this ingratitude is hidden from no one.

أَمْ آتَّخَذَ مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ بَنَاتٍ وَأَصْفَنَ كُمْ بِالْبَينِ ﴿١٦﴾

**Has He taken daughters for Himself and favoured
you with sons? [16] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 16)**

Allah *Glorified is He* responded to them with this mocking question: 'or (do you think), perchance, that out of all His creation He has chosen for Himself daughters, and favoured you with sons?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 16) If they wrongly believed that females were lesser in status than males, is it conceivable, given that Allah *Glorified is He* is the Creator, to grant daughters for Himself, and grant sons for them.

(1) This verse is related in *Al-Mawsu'at Ash-Shi'riyya* as follows:

We only take what he gave us, just like the earth for our planters,

We grow just what is planted in us.

These lines are from *Bahr (meter) Ar-Rajz*. It has four verses.

Allah *Glorified is He* also said in another chapter: ‘as it is, they ascribe to Allah something that they (themselves) dislike – and (all the while) their tongues utter the lie that (by doing so) they earn supreme merit! Truly, they earn but the fire, and will be left out (of Allah’s grace)!’ (*an-Nahl*: 62)

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* informs us of the proof that their claims are lies and fabrications. He says:

وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُمْ بِمَا ضَرَبَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ مَثَلًا ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ ﴿١٧﴾

**When one of them is given news of the birth of a daughter,
such as he so readily ascribes to the Lord of Mercy, his
face grows dark and he is filled with gloom [17]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 17)**

His saying: ‘(the birth of) what he so readily attributes to the Most Gracious’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 17) is a reference to the daughters which they attributed to Allah *Glorified is He*. In their attribution, they likened a part of Creation to Him because the child, as we said, is a part of his father and, therefore, he resembles him. Furthermore, even though they attributed daughters to Allah *Glorified is He* they themselves (ignorantly) detested having daughters and their faces turned dark if any of them was given tidings of a daughter. Allah described them in the words: ‘...and he is filled with suppressed anger’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 17). This means that any of them used to become filled with worry, sadness, and anger, on hearing that he became a father to a daughter. How could they attribute to Allah *Glorified is He* what they did not accept themselves?

Therefore, the Quran described their affair as an unjust distribution. Allah *Glorified is He* says in the chapter of *an-Najm*: ‘Why – for yourselves (you would choose only) male offspring, whereas to Him (you assign) females. That (division), lo and behold, is an unfair (*deeza*) division!’ (*an-Najm*: 21-22) Allah chose to use the unusual word *deeza* in this verse which only appeared once in the Quran, to emphasise the bizarre nature of their assertion.

Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned what they used to say on hearing the tidings of a daughter. The new father used to say:

أَوَمَنْ يُنَشَّؤُا فِي الْحِلْيَةِ وَهُوَ فِي الْخِصَامِ غَيْرُ مُبِينٍ ﴿١٨﴾

**‘Someone who is brought up amongst trinkets,
who cannot put together a clear argument?’ [18]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 18)**

This verse started with the Arabic interrogative particle, or *hamza* (glottal stop), and this indicates a sudden question. To these (pre-Islamic) Arabs, the female who was raised in embellishment was not equal to the male. The meaning of the phrase spoken by such fathers: ‘What! (Am I to have a daughter –) one who is to be reared in embellishment (and ornaments)’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 18) is a reference to the fact that daughters are brought up in luxury and decorative attire.

A girl, in our society for example, is an object of concern in her clothing and appearance. They are allowed to wear earrings, bracelets, and beautiful clothes that are not worn by the male children. In addition to that, they are generally weaker in elucidating their arguments in moments of dispute.

So, daughters, such as they ascribe to Allah *Glorified is He* are brought up in ease and luxury, wearing silk, gold and jewellery. These (pre-Islamic) Arabs saw that females were created to instil desire and were careful about the appearance of their daughters, beautifying them so that they may get married more easily.

However, such elements of jewellery and embellishment were resorted to when the natural beauty was insufficient. The Arabs used to call a beautiful woman *ghaniya* (independent) because her natural beauty rendered her needless of any adornment.

In contrast to that, to them, having a male birth means having a son who can help his father in the fields and the factory, in debate, quarrel and all kinds of troublesome work. Therefore, the Arabs did not view the daughters equal to the sons.

Of course, this is not a right rule for the sexes. Indeed, we find women whose judgement is clear and are more skilled in debate, surpassing their fellow men. Remember when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his companions *peace be upon them* were prevented from entering Mecca for the lesser pilgrimage (*‘umra*) when they were on the verge of it.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was compelled to settle for the Treaty of Hudaibiyya with the disbelievers of Mecca, in which he agreed to withdraw his pilgrimage that year and make *Hajj* the following year. Upon this agreement, the companions became angry and pained that they were prevented from reaching the *Ka'ba* when they were on the fringes of Mecca. Even 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* got riled and asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'O Messenger of Allah! Are we not on the truth?' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied: 'Of course.' 'Umar asked, 'Are they (the disbelievers) not upon falsehood?' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied: 'Of course.' 'Umar thus asked, 'Then why are we being disgraced⁽¹⁾ (giving the *danniya*) in our religion.'

The people momentarily ceased to obey Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and did not want to follow the orders. Angry from their disobedience, he entered his tent where he found 'Umm Salama *Allah be pleased with her* who said to him, 'How is it that I see you angry, O Messenger of Allah?' He replied, 'The people are on the brink of destruction. I gave them an order that they did not obey.' She said, 'O Messenger of Allah! Excuse them for they are confused. They came from Medina longing for the *Ka'ba*, and it is grievous for them that they should be prevented from it when they are on the fringes of Mecca. O Messenger of Allah, go to what Allah has ordered you and do it in front of them, for, if they were to see you do it, they would know that the matter is resolved and there can be no dispute about it.' So, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* cut his hair in front of them, they themselves did as he did, the problem was solved and they returned to Medina.⁽²⁾

(1) Al-Bukhari related it in his *Sahih* (3529, 2945, 4466); Muslim in his *Sahih* (3238); and Ahmad in his *Musnad* (15408) from the Hadith of Sahl ibn Hunayf. *Ad-Daniyya* means an objectionable quality, i.e., weakness and depravity. *Lissan Al- 'Arab* under *dana*.

(2) The wording of Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (2529) is that Prophet Muhammad said to his Companions: "Get up, perform your sacrifices and shave your heads." But by Allah, not one of them stood up, even after he had said it three times! When none of them got up, he went into Umm Salama's tent and told her what had happened with the people. Umm Salama said, "O Prophet of Allah, is this what you desire? Go out, but speak not a word to anyone until you have sacrificed your camel and summoned your barber so that he may shave your head. So he went out and spoke to no one until he had done that: sacrificed his camel and summoned his barber, who then shaved his head. When=

Out of mercy for the Muslims' jealousy over their religion, revelation was sent down upon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* while he was on the road to Medina. These verses clarified to them the Divine wisdom in their withdrawal that year. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'It was not for your enemies' sake that He stopped your hands from them, for, they are (the ones) who disbelieved and barred you from the Inviolable Mosque and (barred) the consecrated offering (also) from reaching its lawful destination. And had it not been for (some) believing men and (some) believing women whom you did not know, (for fear) that you should trample (kill them) them, and so dishonour would afflict you on their account without (your) knowing it, that Allah may cause whomever He decides to enter His Mercy. If they (believers and disbelievers) had been made clearly distinct, indeed We would have tormented the ones who disbelieved among them with a painful torment.' (*al-Fath*: 25)

So, the wisdom behind the withdrawal that year was that there were many Muslims in Mecca who had hidden their Islam. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* told the Muslims with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that if they had entered by force, fighting would have ensued between them and the disbelievers and some of their Muslim brothers would have been afflicted. In the end, they would have harmed them without knowing it. This is how they came to know the flawless nature of Prophet Muhammad's opinions and his truthfulness in every action. Thus, this advice by Umm Salama was a great example of the wisdom of women.

History is full of examples of women who outstripped men in debate, strength, and character because the Creator did not create things in a mechanical fashion, but rather with power and wisdom. Thus, it is not necessarily the case that all men are strong in debate, or that all women weaker in disputation. The rule necessarily has exceptions.

So, if the rule with women was as narrated in the verse, that they are only reared in embellishment (and ornaments), and are, in conflict, without (demonstrable) argument, the Limitless Power of Allah *Glorified is He* can create, despite this apparent weakness, strength that surpasses that of men.

= *they saw this, they promptly stood up, performed their sacrifices, and started shaving each other so fervently that they nearly shaved their heads off."*

For instance, we can see that many women were queens of their people. An example was the Queen of Saba' (Sheba), whose story was told in the Quran along with the story of Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*. Did she arrive to royalty because there were no men? Of course not! Rather, she excelled in the position of authority because of her intelligence and her sound judgement such that the men accepted her and submitted to her rule. When we read her story in the chapter of *an-Naml*, we find proof of her superior intelligence, insight, diplomacy, and strength in negotiation.

The hoopoe described her saying: 'Behold, I found there a woman ruling over them; and she has been given (abundance) of all (good) things, and hers is a mighty throne' (*an-Naml*: 23). When the letter of Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* reached her, she did not settle only for her own opinion. Rather, she consulted her council, as Allah *Glorified is He* describes: '(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). Therefore, she adopted the principle of consultation. 'She added: "O you nobles! Give me your opinion on the problem with which I am now faced; I would never make a (weighty) decision unless you are present with me."' (*an-Naml*: 32)

Then, she tried to address the issue in an amicable fashion, far removed from violence and bloodshed because she knew the nature of Kings. 'She said, "Verily, whenever kings enter a country they corrupt it, and turn the noblest of its people into the most abject. And this is the way they (always) behave. Hence, behold, I am going to send a gift to those (people), and await whatever (answer) the envoys bring back."' (*an-Naml*: 34-35)

Furthermore, look at the ingenuity and discretion in her reply when they disguised⁽¹⁾ her throne and asked her, 'Is your throne like this? She answered,

(1) *Nakkaru laha 'arshaha* (they disguised her throne); *al-tankir* here means changing, i.e. they changed her throne such that when she saw it she did not recognise it (*Al-Fath Al-Qadir* by Shawkani). Ibn Jawzi said in *Zad Al-Masir*, 'The exegetes have six different opinions regarding this change:

1. That parts were taken off and parts added. This was related from Ibn 'Abbas.
2. That they put the gold plating in the place of the silver plating and vice-versa.
3. That they removed the jewels and precious stones from it.

These first three sayings are attributed to Ibn 'Abbas.

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“It is as though it were the same (throne)!” (*an-Naml*: 42) When the matter ended with her embracing Islam, she said, ‘...O my Lord! I have been sinning against myself (by worshipping aught but You): but (now) I have surrendered myself, with Sulaiman (Solomon), unto The Lord of all the Worlds’ (*an-Naml*: 44). She did not enter Islam out of fear of Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* nor to please him. Rather, she submitted with him to Allah *Glorified is He* as if to say, ‘He and I are equal in our submission to Allah’.

In Egypt, there was a lady named ‘Shajarat Ad-Dur’ (The Tree of Pearls)⁽¹⁾, who was bestowed with worldly wisdom and penetrating insight that enabled her to overcome the political crisis after her husband died. She hid the news of his death and took the reins of power herself so that the strength of the army, at war in another land, would not wane. Shajarat Ad-Dur was the one who took us to the *Ka’ba*, and she was the one who cloaked it.

Of course, these examples are not restricted to the history of Islam. We also find, in the pre-Islamic age women of manifest wisdom who surpassed their male counterparts. It is narrated of ‘Umama⁽²⁾ bint Al-Harith ibn ‘Umar that she married ‘Awf ibn Muhallim Ash-Shaybani⁽³⁾ and bore him a daughter

= 4. That they changed the red parts to green and vice-versa. This was the saying of Mujahid.

5. That they turned it upside down, back to front, took parts off it and added parts to it. This was the opinion of Qatada.

6. That they added statues of fish to it. This was the opinion of Abu Salah.’

(1) She was Umm Khalil, the Queen of Egypt and her agnomen was ‘Ismat Ad-Din. She was originally one of the slave girls of the righteous King Najm Ad-Din Ayyub. He bought her during his father’s reign and she won his favour. She bore him a son, Khalil, after which he freed her and married her. She resided with him in the Levant for a long time and then moved to Egypt where she would sometimes take care of matters of state. She was fully literate, intelligent, and prudent. She hid her husband’s death and passed away herself in the year 655 A.H. Az-Zirikli, *Al-A‘lam* 3/158.

(2) She was ‘Umama bint Al-Harith ibn ‘Umar with her husband ‘Awf ibn Muhallim Ash-Shaybani. She was an eloquent noble lady of the pre-Islamic times. *Al-A‘lam* by Az-Zirikli 2/11).

(3) He was from the nobility of the Arabs in Pre-Islamic times. He was obeyed by his people. He died in the year 45 before the *Hijra*, 580 CE Az-Zirikli, *Al-A‘lam* 5/96. No-one entered his shrine hungry except that they were fed or fearful except they were given security *Kitab Al-Muhabbir*.

named Umm `Unas. She was very attractive, so much so that the Arabs would tell tales of her eloquence and beauty. The Prince of Kinda, an Arab nobleman named `Amr ibn Hujr, desired to marry her. He asked his companion, Ibn Sinan, 'Can you think, O Ibn Sinan, of any living Arab who would reject me were I to propose?' Ibn Sinan said, 'Yes. I know one who will turn you down.' 'Who?' he asked. '`Awf ibn Muhallim', he replied. The Prince of Kinda said, 'Then, let us go to him.'

When they arrived at his house, `Awf said to them, 'Welcome! Welcome `Amr! What has brought you to us?' The Prince said, 'I have come as a suitor.' `Awf, the father, replied, 'But that is not your place', which meant that the prince was not a match for his daughter. `Awf's wife overheard this conversation and exclaimed to him, '`Awf, who was that man who rode out to you but to whom you spoke only briefly?' He said, 'It was `Amr ibn Hujr, a nobleman from the Arabs.' She said, 'And why did you not be hospitable and take him in?' 'Because he disapproved of me,' he said. 'Why?' she asked. 'He came as a suitor', he said. His wife said: 'If he is a nobleman from the Arabs, and he came as a suitor, then who will marry your daughters if the noblemen of the Arabs cannot? Catch up with him and accept him.' So, `Awf went and caught up with `Amr and his companion, Ibn Sinan, calling out to him, 'O `Amr, come back with me for I have for you something you desire.' `Amr and his friend turned around. `Awf continued, 'You came to me while I was angry, and I said what I said, but now I have changed my mind.' So, he took them back to his house.

Now, `Awf had three daughters: an elder, middle and a younger daughter. He went to the eldest and said to her, 'My daughter. `Amr ibn Hujr has come to propose to you.' 'No, father,' she said. 'But why?' he asked. She said, 'Because I am an unattractive woman and my character is harsh. Harith is neither your neighbour nor am I his cousin, and I fear that, should something happen, he would divorce me and I would be disgraced.' He said, 'You may go. May Allah bless you.' Then, he went to the next daughter and said to her what he said to her sister. She said, 'No, father, for I am not pretty, nor am I good in housework, and I fear that were he to divorce me, I would be disgraced.' He said to her, 'You may go. May Allah bless you.' Then, he went to the youngest

daughter and said to her what he said to her sisters. She replied, 'Yes, father, for my character is fair, my appearance is good and I am skilled with housework. So, if he would divorce me, then may Allah withhold His blessings from him and leave him no offspring.'

So, 'Awf went to 'Amr and said to him, 'I allow you to marry my youngest daughter, willingly.' He then prepared some quarters in his house so that 'Amr might approach his bride there. But, when he approached her she said, 'I did respect and love you, but now I have no need of you.' Her groom asked, 'But why?' She answered, 'Should we do this here, in the presence of my father and sisters? By Allah, it shall not happen!' He said, 'Then let us go to our home.' So, he told his friend Ibn Sinan to ride with the caravan while he lagged behind at the side of the road, where he approached her once again. She said, 'Is this how it is going to be done, as if I am a captive slave girl? By Allah, nothing will ever happen until you go to your neighbourhood, slaughter camels and cattle, feed the people and do as the likes of you should do for the likes of me.'

So, when they reached his district, he slaughtered animals and fed the people. Then he wanted to approach her and she said to him, 'O 'Amr. Are you thinking about women when there are two tribes of Arabs fighting? Go and make peace between them first, and you will find that you have missed nothing with your wife. So, 'Amr went and made peace between the two fighting tribes, paying blood money for the dead soldiers on each side, with a total of 3,000 camels from his own wealth.

He then returned to his wife, who, when she saw what he had done, said, 'Now, O Harith! Now!'⁽¹⁾ These are examples of women who had sound minds and arguments.

When 'Amr wanted to propose to Umm Unas⁽²⁾ bint 'Awf, he invited a woman from Kinda named 'Isam and said to her, 'Go, so that you may discover the

(1) This story is told in full by Abu Al-Farj Al-Asfahani in his *Kitab Al-Aghani* and by Ibn Hamdun in *At-Tadhkira Al-Hamduniyya* in the third chapter on 'Nobility and Leadership'.

(2) Umm Unas bint 'Awf, Her father wanted to bury her alive, but then he said, 'Let her be, for maybe she will give birth to many people (*unas*)'. Thereafter she became known as Umm Unas (the mother of many people).

truth about `Awf's daughter for me.' So, the woman, `Isam, went to `Awf's house and was met by `Umama, who perceived the reason for her visit. She prepared a tent for her daughter and said to her, 'Wait in here, for `Isam wants to see you. Do not hide anything that she may wish to see of your face or being, and speak to her of that she desires, for she has come for that reason.'

So `Isam entered upon Umm Unas and found her as she had hoped, with nothing hidden from her, and said, 'He has abandoned deception who reveals his cloak.'⁽¹⁾ This became a proverb among the Arabs until this very day.

When she returned to `Amr, he said to her, 'What happened, `Isam?'

She said, 'The butter has separated from the milk.' This meant that the results of the visit were promising. 'Tell me more', he said to her. 'I will tell you straight and true', she said. She then began to describe Umm Unas from head to toe, but we will suffice here with what is not prohibited.

She described her by saying, 'I saw a forehead like a burnished mirror, decorated by hair like the plaited tails of stallions. Were she to brush it, one would imagine it to be like pure flowing water, and were she to undo it, one would say it was like bunches of grapes glistening from the rain. Beneath it are two eyebrows, arched as if drawn with a pen or blackened with charcoal, over the wide⁽²⁾ eyes of a gazelle that has neither been hunted by man⁽³⁾ nor startled by a lion. Between them a nose like the blade of an unsheathed sword, neither too short, nor too long, flanked by two rosy cheeks, on skin as white as pearls. Upon her is a mouth like a ring, with an inviting smile, bright white teeth and an eloquent tongue, decorated with two red lips like a rose, moistened as though with honey. Beneath that is a neck like a vase of silver

(1) This story was mentioned by Ibn `Abd Rabbih in *Al-Iqd Al-Farid*, by Zamakhshari in *Al-Mustaqsa Fi Amthal Al-`Arab*, by Abu Hatim As-Sijistani in *Al-Muhammarun Wal-Wasaya*, by Abu Hilal Al-`Askari in *Jamharat Al-Amthal* and by Al-Maydani in *Majma` Al-Amthal*.

(2) *Al-`Abhara* means 'full-bodied, combining beauty, body and form', *Lisan Al-`Arab*, and it also means a beautiful woman. *Khizanat Al-`Adab* by `Abd Al-Qadir Al-Baghdadi.

(3) *Al-Qanid* means a hunter, and *lam yar`aha qanid* means 'a hunter has never scared it'. Thus, the eye of the gazelle which has never been scared by a hunter is wide, calm, and peaceful, as was the eye of this woman.

resting upon submissive shoulders', and so, she continued describing her in that manner.⁽¹⁾

Before Umm 'Unas left her father's house for her husband's house, her mother did not fail to give her daughter the following sound advice that would guarantee her a happy marriage if she should follow it. Listen to her words⁽²⁾, as she said, 'My dear daughter, were advice to be left unsaid due to tact, it would be left for you, as you do not need advice. However, advice is a reminder for the heedless and a source of strength for the wise. Were a woman to have little want of a husband due to the wealth of her parents or because of their dire need for her, then none would need him less than you, but women were created for men, and men for women. My dear daughter, you are departing the environment from whence you came and abandoning the nest where you grew up, to an abode you know not, and a companion with whom you are unfamiliar. If you guard ten things, they will be a treasure for you. The first and second are that you should seek his good pleasure through being contented and that you should pay attention to his words and obey them. The third and fourth are that you should examine yourself regarding what he may see or smell. His eye must not fall upon something foul and his nose should never smell any but the finest odours. As for the fifth and sixth, you must be aware of the times of his sleep and his food, for repeated hunger is an inflammation and disturbed sleep is a source of vexation. The seventh and the eighth are that you should guard his wealth and be considerate of his family and his followers. The core principle in wealth is economising appropriately and the core principle with family is maintaining a good opinion. Finally, the ninth and the tenth are that you should disobey him in nothing and divulge not his secrets, for if you oppose his will, you will provoke his anger, and if you share his secret you are not safe from his departure. Apart from that I caution you against being joyful in his presence when he has worries, or depressed when he is joyful.'

(1) Ibn 'Abd Rabbih Al-Andalusi related it in *Al-'Iqd Al-Farid* in the section 'The Character and Characteristics of Women', Al-Muhibb Ad-Dimishqi (d. 1699AH) in *Khulasat Al-Athar Fi A'yan Al-Qarn Al-Hadi 'Ashar*, Al-Maydani in *Majma 'Al-Amthal* (under *ma wara'ak ya 'Isam*) and An-Nuwayri in *Nihayat Al-Arab Fi Funun Al-Adab* under the letter *mim*, regarding the saying, *ma wara'ak ya 'Isam*.

(2) Al-Asbahani mentioned this counsel in *Al-Mustatraf Fi Kul Fann Mustazhraf*, in the first section of the chapter 'Women and their Qualities'.

This is a template for women of sound mind and intelligence. Were the wives of the world to take this advice, we would be free of much of the evil of marital discord that we endure every day. Allah then says:

وَجَعَلُوا الْمَلَائِكَةَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عِبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ إِنثًا
 أَشْهَدُوا خَلْقَهُمْ سَتُكْتَبُ شَهَادَتُهُمْ وَيُسْأَلُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

They consider the angels – God’s servants – to be female. Did they witness their creation? Their claim will be put on record and they will be questioned about it [19] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 19)

This is another of their claims and fabrications against Allah *Glorified is He*. This verse comes after the verse where they ascribe a son to Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘They attribute to Him a part (*juz*)’ (offspring) from among some of His servants! Verily, most obviously bereft of all gratitude is man!’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 15) Then they ascribed daughters to Allah *Glorified is He* while preferring sons for themselves. Allah *Glorified is He* proceeded to shed a light on the corruption of their beliefs and refuted them with evidence and proof from their everyday lives.

Here they described the angels, who are the servants of the All-Merciful, as females, which in itself is another lie. Allah *Glorified is He* refuted their claim by saying, ‘Did they witness their creation?’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 19) How did they arrive at this conclusion? Did they see the creation of the angels such that they might assert this? Then He warned them by saying: ‘This false claim of theirs will be recorded, and they will be called to account’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 19). Therefore, their words will be written down and recorded, and on the Day of Judgement, they will be asked about it and taken to account for all their fabrications. Allah *Glorified is He* says in another chapter: ‘I did not make them witnesses of the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor their own creation; nor choose I misguided people as (My) helpers’ (*al-Kahf*: 51).

We can see the truth of this verse in our daily lives, as we can see such deceptive characters, in every age, misguiding the people and diverting them away from the truth. At the forefront of these evil people are those who attribute sons or daughters to Allah *Glorified is He* or those who describe the

angels as female, or those who say that man is descended from random chance in a particular fashion.

We ask all of these, 'Did you see their creation'? Allah *Glorified is He* the Creator, says, 'I did not make them witnesses of the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor their own creation' (*al-Kahf*: 51). So, do not lend credence to these people for they are deceptive liars. Allah *Glorified is He* has made them subservient to His creation, and made them a proof of the truthfulness of His Speech.

Among these deceptive persons are those who deny the Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying, 'We only accept what is in the Quran and do not recognise the *Sunnah* as an authority'. This group of people has come as a proof of the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who, fourteen centuries ago, prophesised that they will be present. Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* said: 'The time is close when a man among you, lying on his couch, will say, 'Between you and us is the Book of Allah *Glorified is He*. So, what we find in it to be permissible, we shall consider it permissible, and what we find in it to be forbidden, we shall treat it as forbidden.'

Indeed, what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said is just as Allah *Glorified is He* Himself said:⁽¹⁾

وَقَالُوا لَوْ شَاءَ الرَّحْمَنُ مَا عَبَدْنَاهُمْ مَّا لَهُمْ بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

They say, 'If the Lord of Mercy had willed it, we would not have worshipped them,' but they do not know that – they are only guessing [20] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 20)

This is another of their false claims and fabrications against Allah *Glorified is He*. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* replied to them that their speech is false and

(1) It was related on the authority of Al-Miqdam ibn Ma'ddi Karrib that Prophet Muhammad said, 'The time is close when a man, lying on his couch, will narrate my sayings and say, "between you and I is the Book of Allah. So, what we find within it to be permissible, let us treat it as permissible, and whatever we find in it to be forbidden, let us treat it as forbidden." Indeed, what the Messenger of Allah has forbidden is the same as what Allah has forbidden.' Ahmad narrated it in his *Musnad* (4/133), and *At-Tirmidhi* (2664), *Ibn Majah* (12) and *Daraqutni* (4/286) in their books, the *Sunnan*, and this wording is from *Daraqutni*.

baseless, uttered without comprehension or knowledge, as He says, ‘...they do nothing but guess’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 20). They are being dishonest in their claims.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ كِتَابًا مِّن قَبْلِهِ فَهُمْ بِهِ مُسْتَمْسِكُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

Or have We perhaps given them a book before this one, to which they hold fast? [21] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 21)

Why did they claim these things? Did a messenger bring them a book that said these things they claimed or permitted them to worship idols: ‘...to which they are still holding fast’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 21) devotedly, Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

بَلْ قَالُوا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَرِهِمْ مُّهْتَدُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

No indeed! They say, ‘We saw our fathers following this tradition; we are guided by their footsteps’ [22] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 22)

So, their case is a case of blind imitation of their forefathers, without deliberation or explanation. They said, ‘Behold, We found our forefathers agreed on a way (*ummah*)’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 22). Their forefathers were on a specific religion or belief system. The word *ummah* is derived from the verb *umm*, which means ‘to intend a particular direction’. ‘And, verily, it is in their footsteps’ and their methods, ‘...that we find our guidance’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 22). Their forefathers’ method is the one that directs their actions and guides them.

The Bounteous Quran dealt with this subject in many other chapters. In one verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘But when they are told, “Follow what Allah has revealed”, some (of them) answer, “Nay, we shall follow (only) that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing.” Why (would they do that), even if their forefathers did not use their reason at all, and were devoid of all guidance?’ (*al-Baqara*: 170) Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: ‘For when they are told, “Come unto that which Allah has revealed, and unto the Apostle”, – they answer, “Enough for us is that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing.” Why (would they do that), even though their forefathers knew nothing, and were devoid of all guidance?’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 104)

Ponder the precision of the Quranic articulation in these two verses, and how each verse is concluded with an ending appropriate to it. To begin with, we see that the general meaning of the two verses is the same. However, in the first verse, they are mentioned saying, 'Nay, we shall follow that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing' (*al-Baqara*: 170). In the second verse, they are mentioned saying: 'Enough for us is that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing' (*al-Ma'ida*: 104), where they used the rhetorical devices of limitation (*qasr*) and restriction (*hasr*). They limited their worship to the way of their fathers. Therefore, their rejection in the second verse is stronger than the first verse, and we find that the ending of the verse is suited to this rejection.

In the first verse, Allah *Glorified is He* refuted their saying with a mocking question: 'Why, even if their forefathers did not use their reason at all, and were devoid of all guidance?' (*al-Baqara*: 170) Then, in the second verse: 'Why, even though their forefathers knew nothing, and were devoid of all guidance?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 104) So, what is the difference between the phrase: 'did not use their reason at all' (*al-Baqara*: 170), and the phrase: 'knew nothing' (*al-Ma'ida*: 104)? The former phrase refers to the one who is capable of deriving judgments on his own by virtue of his intellect. The second phrase, however, refers to the one who is incapable of such derivation, but rather relies upon that of other peoples' directions. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَكَذَلِكَ مَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّنْ نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَرِهِمْ مُّقْتَدُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

Whenever We sent a messenger before you to warn a township, those corrupted by wealth said, in the same way, 'We saw our fathers following this tradition; we are only following in their footsteps' [23]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 23)

Allah's saying: 'a warner' refers to every messenger sent to any of the various nations. Never was a messenger sent except that he was faced with such stubbornness and denial. 'Its people who had lost themselves entirely in the

pursuit of pleasures' (*az-Zukhruf*: 23) are *al-mutrafun*, or those who lived in ease and perpetually followed their passions. These people were often the leaders of disbelief and were at the forefront of those who denied the messengers.

The phrase: 'Our forefathers agreed on a way (*ummah*) (regarding what to believe)' (*az-Zukhruf*: 23) means that they agreed upon a religion or a certain course of action. 'And, verily, it is but in their footsteps that we follow' (*az-Zukhruf*: 23) by doing the same things that the forefathers did. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ أَوْلَوْا جِئْتُكُمْ بِأَهْدَىٰ مِمَّا وَجَدْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَكُمْ
قَالُوا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

The messenger said, 'Even though I bring you a truer religion than what you saw your fathers following?' and they replied, 'But we do not believe the message you bring' [24] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 24)

This is a clear evidence of their determination to dismiss the message and holding firm to the misguidance upon which they and their fathers were. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَأَنقَضْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَاظُنُّوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

We punished them: think about how those who rejected the Truth met their end [25] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 25)

This was Allah's punishment to anyone who rejected the messengers. He said in another chapter: 'For, long ago has Our word gone forth unto Our servants, the message-bearers, that, verily, they, indeed, would be succoured, and that, verily, Our hosts, indeed, would (in the end) be victorious' (*as-Saffat*: 171-173). Then, Allah *Glorified is He* mentions that which refutes these disbelievers' choice to blindly imitate their forefathers. The next verse nullifies their logic and Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies their lies as He says:

وَلِذَٰلِكَ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ إِنَّنِي بَرَاءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

**Abraham said to his father and his people,
'I renounce what you worship [26]
(The Quran, az-Zukhruf: 26)**

Allah *Glorified is He* chose to expose their forgery and reveal the lies of the disbelievers when they said: 'Nay, we shall follow (only) that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing' (*al-Baqara*: 170). He gave them a real example from their everyday lives.

Look at Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* the 'Father of the Prophets'. Prophet Ibrahim *peace be upon him* commanded the respect of all the Arabs to the point that they held him sacred and boasted that they descended from him. They used to exclaim, 'We are descended from Ibrahim (Abraham)!' However, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) did not follow the way of his uncle in worshiping idols. So, the question to the disbelievers was, 'Why do you follow your forefathers and not follow Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham)'?

Therefore, through the story of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), Allah refutes their imitation logically and practically. If one were to seek out the first man, he would only seek the path of Adam *peace be upon him* and Adam followed certain commandments and applied them so that his children would also apply these rules after him. So, how did the deviation from this methodology occur?

With the passage of time, there must have been people who abandoned the commandments and turned them upside down so that they could follow their own whims. Therefore, some people started worshipping idols because they believed that they were not subject to the heavenly path, nor answerable to its commandments and prohibitions. They found that the worship of earthly idols placed no responsibility upon them, and thus, they ended up worshipping them.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And when Ibrahim spoke to his father' (*az-Zukhruf*: 26). This phrase has been the subject to much discussion amongst the scholars.⁽¹⁾ Was this his real father or was it his uncle, Azar?

(1) Alusi said in his exegesis, *Ruh Al-Ma'ani* (Al-An'am 74), 'Ibn Abu Hatim related on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas that Ibrahim's (Abraham's) father was called Azar and his mother was called Muthla. The opinion of Mujahid was that Azar was not his name,=

Whoever researches the use of the phrase *abeeh* (his father) in the Quran will find that it is mentioned eight times, the first of which is in the chapter of *al-An`am*, in which Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And, lo, (thus) spoke Ibrahim (Abraham) unto his father, Azar’ (*al-An`am*: 74). The last mention was in the chapter of *al-Mumtahanah*. Apart from that, the phrase was just mentioned once in the Quran in the story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*: ‘Lo! Thus, spoke Yusuf (Joseph) unto his father’ (*Yusuf*: 4).

Thus, the name of Azar only came in the verse in the chapter of *a-An`am* which is the first mention of the word *abeeh*. It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* has stopped the debate in this issue, choosing to show us that Azar was his uncle. This was clearly indicated by His saying: ‘unto his father, Azar’ (*al-An`am*: 74). In all the other instances, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘to his father’ only. In this way, his father was the one we are already familiar with from the chapter of *al-An`am*. It is a common occurrence in our language that we refer to the uncle as a ‘father’. For example, when someone asks, ‘Is your father here?’ we understand that he is referring to our true father. However, if he says, ‘Is your father, Muhammad, here?’ this would mean your uncle because the caller has defined his intention by using the name after the description.

Furthermore, the Quran included the uncle in the word ‘fathers’ (*aba`*) in Allah’s saying: ‘Nay, but you (yourselves, O children of Israel,) bear witness that when death was approaching Ya`qub (Jacob), he said unto his sons, “Whom will you worship after I am gone?” They answered, ‘We will worship your Lord (Allah), the Lord of your forefathers Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac), the One God; and unto Him will we surrender ourselves.”’ (*al-Baqara*: 133) Here, the word ‘forefathers’ (*aba`*) was plural, referring to Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon them*. If a group share in a predicate which is plural, then it is applied to each of them individually. Thus, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) was a father to

= and this was also the opinion of Sa`id ibn Musayyib and others. Those who discussed this point differed about it. Some said that Azar was a nickname for his father, while others said that it was the name of his grandfather, and others claimed that it was the name of his uncle, as both the grandfather and uncle can be metaphorically called ‘a father’. Still others said that it was the name of an idol, and some claimed that it was an adjective in their language that meant either erroneous, stooping or a frail old man.”

them, and Ismail (Ishmael) was a father and Ishaq (Isaac) was a father *peace be upon them*. Metaphorically, these three were all Ya'qub's (Jacob's) fathers (*aba`*). However, literally, we know that Ismail (Ishmael) was Ishaq's (Isaac's) brother, so if Ishaq (Isaac) was a father, then Ismail (Ishmael) could not, literally, be a father. Rather, Ismail (Ishmael) was an uncle. Thus, we see that an uncle can be named a father, according to the Quranic language.

For this reason, when Allah *Glorified is He* spoke about Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* he said: 'unto his father, Azar' (*al-An'am*: 74), to clarify for us that Azar, who debated with Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and argued with him about the oneness of Allah *Glorified is He* was not his true father. Ibrahim (Abraham) Rather, it was his uncle.

Ibrahim (Abraham) We also find proof for this in the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* where he said of his own origin: 'I continued to be transferred from the loins of the pure to the wombs of the pure. I am the elected from the elected.'⁽¹⁾ The Prophet's *peace and blessings be upon him* lineage stretches back to Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), and thus Ibrahim's (Abraham's) father could not have been a disbeliever who worshipped idols.

As for Prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham's) saying: 'Verily, I am innocent (*bara`*) from (the idols) which you worship' (*az-Zukhruf*: 26), the word *bara`* (innocent) follows a similar connotation to the Arabic word *baree`* which also indicates innocence and purity. The difference between the two Arabic words is that *bara`* can be said of one, two or more people, be they men or women. On the other hand, the word *baree`* has to be transformed into the dual or plural forms and has to be changed to mean the masculine or feminine meaning.

In another place in the Quran, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* described the idols as enemies, as he said: 'Verily, these are my enemies, (and none is my helper) except the Lord of all the Worlds' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 77).

(1) *This Hadith has been mentioned in this form in most of the books of exegesis, but they did not mention its narrator, chain of narration or the person who related it, nor did any of them trace it back to any book. However, Ibn `Asakir has related in the Tahdhib Tarikh Dimashq on the authority of Anas who said, 'Prophet Muhammad recited: "Indeed, there has come unto you (O mankind) an Apostle from among yourselves" (at-Tawba: 128), with a fatha on the letter fa`, and said, "I am the purest of you in lineage, marriage and descent. Since the time of Adam, there has not been one fornicator amongst my forefathers, we are all the offspring of marriages."' (1/278)*

Thus, he was telling them that he was disassociating himself with them, as long as they worship partners with Allah *Glorified is He* or continue to disbelieve in His Oneness.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, narrating the words of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham):

إِلَّا الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي فَإِنَّهُ سَيَهْدِينِ ﴿٢٧﴾

I worship only Him who created me, and it is He who will guide me [27] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 27)

The meaning of the phrase: ‘...Him (Allah) who has brought me into being (*fatarani*)’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 27) is that Allah *Glorified is He* created him and shaped him. Then, his saying: ‘...and, behold, indeed, (it is who) will guide me!’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 27) shows us that life’s path must be outlined by Allah *Glorified is He* the One Who created and guided all the bodies in existence.

It is not conceivable that, after Allah *Glorified is He* had created everything, people then choose their own way in life. We previously mentioned that the artisan puts together a manual for the maintenance of his product. It is he who is most knowledgeable about what is good for it. Notice also that Allah *Glorified is He* says here, narrating the words of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham): ‘...and, behold, indeed, (it is He who) will guide me (*sa-yahdeen*)!’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 27) using the Arabic article *sa* before the verb *yahdeen*, to indicate the future.

In another place Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘and (it is He) who guides me’ (*ash-Shu’ara*: 78), in the present tense. Thus, we can see that Allah’s guidance is a matter of the present and the future.

Allah *Glorified is He* uses brevity in expression here to indicate that the path and guidance can only come from the Creator. He says, ‘...and, behold, indeed, (it is who) will guide me!’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 27) On the other hand, Allah *Glorified is He* says in the chapter of *ash-Shu’ara*: ‘Who has created me and He (*huwa*) [is the One] who guides me, and He (*huwa*) is the One who gives me to eat and to drink, and when I fall ill, He (*huwa*) is the One who restores me to health’ (*ash-Shu’ara*: 78-80). Here Allah *Glorified is He* used the separated personal pronoun *huwa* in front of the main verbs or action in these verses, like the actions of guidance, feeding, and treatment, to indicate that

these verbs are restricted to Allah *Glorified is He* alone, as some people might attribute them to powers besides Allah *Glorified is He*.

On the other hand, the Quranic verbs that no imagination can attribute to anyone but Allah *Glorified is He* came in an abbreviated form, without using the restrictive pronoun *huwa*. For instance, in Allah's words: 'and who will cause me to die and then will bring me back to life' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 81), the word *huwa* is not used, as no imagination will attribute life or death to anyone but Allah *Glorified is He*.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَجَعَلَهَا كَلِمَةً بَاقِيَةً فِي عَقِبِهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

**And he bequeathed these words to his descendants
so that they might return [to God] [28]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 28)**

Allah *Glorified is He* then says, 'And he [Ibrahim (Abraham)] uttered this' (*az-Zukhruf*: 28). This refers to Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) stating his innocence from their attribution of partners with Allah *Glorified is He* (polytheism or *shirk*). It could also be a reference to his statement of belief, as it is related in Allah's saying: 'And this very thing did Ibrahim bequeath unto his children, and (so did) Ya'qub (Jacob), "O my children! Behold, Allah has granted you the purest faith; so do not allow death to overtake you except after you have become Muslims (surrendered yourselves unto Him)"' (*al-Baqara*: 132).

He wanted this creed to be, 'destined to endure' (*az-Zukhruf*: 28), and lasting 'among those who would come after him' (*az-Zukhruf*: 28) of his descendants. Indeed, this statement will still be alive and circulating on people's tongues for a long time because of its purity. Allah *Glorified is He* has guaranteed the longevity of such pure statements in His saying: 'Are you not aware how Allah sets forth the parable of a good word? (It is) like a good tree, firmly rooted, (reaching out) with its branches towards the sky, yielding its fruit⁽¹⁾ at

(1) *Al-Akl* is what may be eaten or fruits that suitable for eating. *Al-Qamus Al-Qawim* 1/23). *Al-Akl* can be the fruit of palms or of trees, indeed, anything that can be eaten may be termed *akl*. *Lisan Al-'Arab* under *Akal*

all times by its Lord's leave. And (thus it is that) Allah propounds parables unto men, so that they might bethink themselves (of the truth)' (*Ibrahim*: 25-25).

He named it a *kalima* (word) because it is a part of speech (*kalam*) and because the word *kalima* in Arabic can be used to refer to a lot of speech. For instance, we say, 'That person gave a word (*kalima*) at the party'. This means that he gave a speech composed of many words. Ibn Malik said in his *Alfiyya*, 'And speech (*kalam*) can be intended by a word (*kalima*).' This means that we can use the word *kalima* to mean a great deal of speech.

بَلْ مَتَّعْتُ هَؤُلَاءِ وَآبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ وَرَسُولٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٢٩﴾
وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ وَإِنَّا بِهِ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

I have let these people and their fathers enjoy long lives, and now I have given them the Truth and a messenger to make things clear [29] yet when the Truth came to them, they said, 'This is sorcery. We do not believe in it' [30] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 29 - 30)

As we have previously said, with the passage of time, the true path becomes obfuscated and people continue to turn away from it until necessity calls for a new prophet to bring them back to the correct way. Allah *Glorified is He* has created a natural immunity in the human soul because man is Allah's vicegerent on earth. Man is the one who will populate the world so he must be furnished with the means to act positively and behave uprightly.

It is because of this that we see that men of sound mind will immediately feel remorse and repent when, due to a moment of forgetfulness, he falls into disobedience. Uprightness is a seed in a man's soul. If he is afflicted in his soul and loses this immunity, then the immunity should be provided by the society that knows and understands its communal role in enjoining good and forbidding evil. If the society also loses its resilience, then this is the last straw and nothing remains except for heavenly intervention, when another messenger is sent with a new revelation.

So, this deviation from the path occurred after Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and Prophet Ismail's (Ishmael's) times, and therefore, the Message of Prophet

Muhammad *peace be upon him* was revealed. Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) wanted this creed to remain amongst his descendants: ‘...so that they might return’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 28) to Allah’s way.

However, this did not happen, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘I allowed them (the disbelievers) to enjoy their lives freely’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 29), and: ‘...their forbearers’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 29) by giving them luxury, safety, power and status. ‘Are they, then, not aware that We have set up a sanctuary secure (for those who believe in Us), while, all around them, men are being carried away (by fear and despair)?’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 67) He gave them rank and high status amongst the Arabs due to their proximity to the *Ka’ba*.

This continued to be the case: ‘until the truth came to them’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 29), found in the Quran, as well as: ‘a clear (*mubeen*) apostle’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 29) who is Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The word *mubeen* in this verse means that the truth will be manifest at his hands and in everything about him.

However, they did not believe the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* or have faith in the truth. ‘But now that the truth has come to them, they say, “All this is mere spellbinding eloquence – and, behold, we deny that there is any truth in it!”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 30) They considered the Quran to be a form of magic that puts anyone who heard it under its spell. At other times, they accused Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of being a sorcerer.

As we have previously said, it is very easy to refute this claim of theirs. If Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had been a sorcerer and the Quran was a magical spell on the believers, then why did he not just put a spell on them as well and accomplish his matter? Thus, the existence of disbelief is a confirmation of the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad, and that he is not a sorcerer, but a truthful prophet from Allah *Glorified is He*.

When this accusation failed, they said, ‘It is but a human being that imparts (all) this to him!’ (*an-Nahl*: 103) The disbelievers had claimed that a Persian man taught Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the Quran.⁽¹⁾

(1) In the explanation of verse 103 of the chapter of *an-Nahl* in *Zad Al-Masir*, Ibn Al-Jawzi mentioned nine different opinions regarding the person who they claimed was teaching Prophet Muhammad. They claimed one of the following: =

So, Allah *Glorified is He* tells them: ‘The tongue of him to whom they so maliciously point is a foreign (non-Arabic) tongue, whereas this (The Quran) is a clear Arabic speech’ (*an-Nahl*: 103). Then they claimed that he was insane, to which Allah *Glorified is He* says to Prophet Muhammad: ‘You (O Muhammad) are not, by your Lord’s grace, a madman! And, verily, to you shall be a reward never-ending, for, behold, you keep indeed an exemplary character’ (*al-Qalam*: 2-4). A crazy person cannot have exemplary character because it is a person’s character that controls his behaviour. So, after Allah *Glorified is He* had refuted their claims and accusations in such a way as to reveal their foolishness, they still continued their disbelief.

﴿٣١﴾ وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ عَظِيمٍ

**And they said, ‘Why was this Quran not sent down to a distinguished man, from either of the two cities?’ [31]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 31)**

This is effectively an acknowledgement that the Quran is true, and that they had no more objections to it. Rather, their problem was now with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself. They saw him as an average person, unlike the way they saw their dignitaries. They did not see him as one of the leaders from either of their two great cities, Mecca and

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- = 1. A young man from Bani Al-Mughira called Ya`ish who studied the Torah. Some say he was Byzantine.
 2. A young Christian foreigner named Bal`am who was residing in Mecca.
 3. That it was revealed to a scribe who wrote it out for Prophet Muhammad.
 4. That it was a foreign youth, the servant of a lady of Quraysh called Jabir. Jabir was in the habit of visiting Prophet Muhammad to learn from him. This prompted the polytheists to say, ‘This is the one that Muhammad is learning from’.
 5. That they meant Salman Al-Farisi. This however is very weak because Salman became Muslim in Medina whereas this verse is Meccan.
 6. That it was a blacksmith called ‘Buhannas the Christian’.
 7. That they meant a youth owned by `Amir ibn Al-Hadrami. He was a foreign Jew called Basar and his nickname was Abu Fakiha.
 8. That it was a foreign boy called `Ayish who was the slave of Huwaytib and had entered Islam. This position was related by Al-Fara` and Az-Zujaj.
 9. That there were two men, one whose name was Yasar and the other Jayr. They made swords in Mecca and they studied the book of the Christians.

Ta'if. For instance, in Ta'if, they considered 'Urwa ibn Mas'ud Ath-Thaqafi as a great man, and in Mecca, they regarded Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira highly, along with others. Allah *Glorified is He* replied to them:

أَهْمُ يَقْسِمُونَ رَحْمَتَ رَبِّكَ نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَعِيشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ
الدُّنْيَا وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ
بَعْضًا سُلْخِيًّا وَرَحْمَتُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

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 and We have raised some of them above others in rank, so that some may take others into service: your Lord's grace is better than anything they accumulate [32]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 32)

So, given that it is Allah who has allotted them the simplest of things, that being their livelihood in the world, do they then want to be the ones to distribute Allah's Grace and Mercy in accordance with their own passions? Rather, Allah dispenses His Mercy to whomsoever He pleases. The matter is entirely in His hands and no one can interfere with its distribution.

His saying: '...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) reveals the incapacity of man, and that life cannot be set straight except by adopting Allah's path.

Part of the wisdom of Allah's distribution of the means of livelihood is that He made some people rich and others poor, some leaders and others servants. Had it not been for this distribution, the organisation of society would not be possible and there would be nobody willing to do hard work or base jobs.

Previously, we explained that the organisation of society and its progression is not based upon giving charity, but upon need. It is the need of the poor man that drives him to work,

The grace indicated by the verse, '...But is it they who distribute thy Lord's Grace...?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32), is prophet hood. They wish they could

make it a matter of choice between themselves; that is, they could elect their prophet from their own nobles and leaders. Allah corrects them, however, saying: ‘How can you desire this when you are incapable of distributing even the most basic of things’?

Notice that the phrase, ‘...and raise some of them by degrees above others...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 32) is undefined. It means that everyone is both raised up and at the same time others are raised over him. In one aspect, one is elevated and in another aspect, someone else is above him. This is how creatures complement one another, mutual benefits are made and the needs of the society are fulfilled. As the poet said,

The people to the people, be they Bedouin or civilised,
Are one to another because of their ignorance, servants.

One is elevated as much as he is proficient at the job they are doing, and is surpassed in those things he knows little of. This is the meaning of His saying: ‘...that they might avail themselves of one another’s help...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 32).

What is meant by ‘Lord’s Grace’ in His saying, ‘...and this Lord’s grace is better than all [the worldly wealth] that they may amass’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 32) is the divine mission and the system which serves to guide creation in the way of truth. In reality, this grace is better than the transient goods over which people compete in the world because whatsoever man may attain of ease, comfort, and relaxation in this world, nevertheless, he will die and leave it all, and nothing will remain for him.

On the contrary, Allah’s system gives you eternal triumph, pleases you in this world, and makes you succeed in the afterlife. Thus, Allah’s system is better and remaining, more beneficial and more enduring. This system guarantees validity of one’s worldly life, peace, and safety in the hereafter; therefore, it is ‘...better...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 32), than the glittery things of this world

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks about the disbelievers who own the world, and who adopt every type of embellishment, luxury, and finery; they interfere even with the provisions and development of the Muslims. He clarifies that this is just ornamentation and a transient external facade, while the final successful outcome must necessarily be in favour of the believers.

وَلَوْلَا أَن يَكُونَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً لَّجَعَلْنَا لِمَن يَكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ لِبُيُوتِهِمْ سُقْفًا مِّن
 فِضَّةٍ وَمَعَارِجَ عَلَيْهَا يَظْهَرُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلِبُيُوتِهِمْ أَبْوَابًا وَسُرَرًا عَلَيْهَا يَتَكَبَّرُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾
 وَزُخْرَفًا وَإِنَّ كُلَّ ذَلِكَ لَمَّا مَتَّعَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةُ عِندَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

If it were not that all mankind might have become a single nation [of disbelievers], We could have given all those who disbelieve in the Lord of Mercy houses with roofs of silver, sweeping staircases to ascend [33] massive gates, couches to sit on [34] and golden ornaments. All of these are mere enjoyments of this life; your Lord reserves the next life for those who take heed of Him [35] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 33-35)

The meaning of ‘...one [evil] community...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 33) is one community holding one creed of disbelief. So, had it not been for the fact that mankind, seeing the disbelievers luxuriating, would be tested by such a status, Allah would have given the disbeliever luxuries that no one could surpass because they would be but the luxuries of this world, transient and perishing, along with the world itself. Albeit, while the disbelievers get their share in this world, the believers get theirs in the afterlife

The Quran is also informing us here of the developments that have taken place fourteen centuries after its revelation. Al-Ma’arij (stairways) means elevators, ladders and things upon which one may go up. ‘...And [silver] stairways whereon to ascend’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 33), i.e. mount and rise.

It seems that the True Lord is making light of the disbelievers’ luxuries, indicating that there is no need for us to be deceived by them, nor to wish for the transient embellishments of which they partake.

After this, He explains that there comes a time upon these extravagant people when they desire to return to their original state of natural simplicity. Thus, you see them on the weekend, for example, going outdoors to wander freely in the bosom of nature, eating from what the earth puts forth and living on minimal provisions. Why? That is because they have become bored by their excessive urban, luxurious lifestyle and the defects and negative aspects that beset it.

وَمَنْ يَعِشْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ ﴿٣٦﴾

We assign an evil one as a comrade for whoever turns away from the revelations of the Lord of Mercy [36] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 36)

‘...Who chooses to remain blind to the remembrance of the Most Gracious...’ means that he outright rejects it or neglects it, turning a blind eye, and because he has been heedless regarding something important wherein negligence is unacceptable, Allah punishes him: ‘...To him We assign an [enduring] evil impulse...’. That is, We prepare and designate a devil for him, ‘...to become his other self’, i.e. that will stick with him, whispering to and misleading him.

As we mentioned previously, the True Lord *Glorified is He* is in no need of His creation. He is the Lord of the believers and the Lord of the disbelievers, and assists each according to their desire. Whosoever wants to be guided to faith, Allah helps them with it and increases their faith more and more, and whosoever prefers disbelief, He seals his heart such that faith cannot enter it and neither can the disbelief be taken out. Therefore, Allah describes Himself here as ‘The Most Gracious’.

This also explains why the most common time for Satan to attack man is at the times of prayer, in order to corrupt the relationship between a believer and his Lord. We said that Satan attends the mosque, not the wine-shop. The Quran tells us that he said, ‘...I shall most certainly lie in ambush for them all along Thy straight way’ (*al-A‘raf*: 16).

We have previously mentioned the story ⁽¹⁾ of the man who hid some money away but subsequently forgot where. He informed his friend of this issue; his friend told him: ‘Go to Abu Hanifa ⁽²⁾, for he has an answer to every question. I sought his legal opinion over the divorce of my wife as I had said

(1) The story of the man who asked Imam Abu Hanifa *Allah rest his soul* about the money he lost and the latter advised him to pray the night prayer

(2) *Abu Hanifa an-Nu‘man ibn Thabit is the Imam of the Hanafis, an independent jurist of the highest level (faqih mujtahid muhaqqiq). He is one of the four Imams of Sunni Islam, and it is said he was Persian. He sold silk for a living and sought knowledge as a youth. He was born in 80 A.H. and passed away in Baghdad in the year 150 A.H. at the age of 71.*

to her while she was on a ladder, 'If you come down you are divorced and if you go up then you are divorced.' To which he (Abu Hanifa) replied, 'Tell her to jump off the ladder.'

So, the first man went to Abu Hanifa and said to him: 'I put some money somewhere, but I can not remember where. What can I do?'

Abu Hanifa said to him, 'There is no branch of knowledge that deals with this, but I have a plan for you. When night time comes, go and pray two circuits of prayer for Allah, for the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* would hasten to pray⁽¹⁾ if some matter befell him.'

The man did as he had been told and while he was praying, Satan came to him and whispered to him, reminding him of the money's location. In the morning, the man returned to Abu Hanifa and told him what happened. Abu Hanifa laughed and said: 'By Allah, I knew he would not be able to leave you to finish the night alone with your Lord. I hope you will finish your prayer out of gratitude to Allah.' The man said: 'Allah willing, I shall.'

وَأَنَّهُمْ لَيَصَّدُّونَهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

**Evil ones bar people from the right path, even
though they may think they are well guided [37]
(The Quran, az-Zukhruf: 37)**

These are indeed evil companions since they 'bar all such from the path [of truth] ...', i.e. they obstruct them and turn them away from the truth and the straightway, '...making them think that they are guided aright!' (*az-Zukhruf*: 37) Hence, Allah says in another verse: 'And a Day on which the evildoer will bite his hands [in despair], exclaiming: "Oh, would that I had followed the path shown to me by the Apostle! Oh, woe is me! Would that I had not taken so-and-so for a friend! Indeed, he led me astray from the remembrance [of Allah] after it had come unto me!" For [thus it is:] Satan is ever a betrayer of man.' (*al-Furqan*: 27-29)

(1) Imam Ahmad related it in his *Musnad* [5/388] and Abu Dawud in his *Sunnan* [1319] on the authority of Hudhayfa Allah rest his soul. The meaning is thus that if a serious matter befell Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* or if he became concerned he would pray.

These evil companions are only companions in this world, but in the afterlife, they will be enemies, each one blaming the other: ‘On that Day, [erstwhile] friends will be foes unto one another – [all] save the Allah-conscious.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 67)

Similarly, Satan will deny his followers and abandon them in the afterlife: ‘...Yet I had no power at all over you: I but called you – and you responded unto me. Hence, blame not me, but blame yourselves...’ (*Ibrahim*: 22).

Our Lord has taught us how to protect ourselves from Satan; He said: ‘And if it should happen that a prompting from Satan stirs thee up [to blind anger], seek refuge with Allah...’ (*al-A‘raf*: 200).

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَنَا قَالَ يَلَيْتَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ بُعْدَ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ فَيَتَسَّ الْقَرَيْنُ ﴿٣٨﴾

When such a person comes to Us, he will say [to his comrade], ‘If only you had been as far away from me as east is from west. What an evil comrade!’ [38]

(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 38)

As for Allah’s saying, ‘...the distance of east and west...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 38), it means the distance between east and west. This is a rhetorical device used in the Arabic language known as *taghlib* (giving precedence over). The east and west are opposites; when talking of two opposites, the Arabs often mention the term referring to one opposite of them, giving precedence to it over the other in wording. For example, when describing the two companions, Abu Bakr and ‘Umar Allah be pleased with them they sometimes say ‘*Al-‘Umarayn*’ (the two ‘Umars). Further, when we ponder on east and west from a geographic and astronomical perspective, we find that the east in a certain geographic area is the west in another area, and vice versa. Thus, they are both easts and they are both wests.

وَلَنْ يَنْفَعَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ إِذْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنَّكُمْ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

[It will be said to them], ‘You have done wrong. Having partners in punishment will not console you today’ [39]

(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 39)

Indeed, it will be a widespread affliction affecting all of them. When a single man is afflicted from among many, it is harder for him to bear, as it is

more tortuous to be grieving when others are rejoicing. When troubles beset a large number of people, however, it is easier to bear the burden due to the shared experience, even if it is grief that is being shared. This meaning was conveyed by Al-Khansa⁽¹⁾ in her elegy on her brother Sakhr when she said,

Were it not for so many weeping around me,
Over their brothers, I would surely have killed me,
And though they weep not like my brother but,
Reassuring myself over him, I seek to console me⁽²⁾
Another poet said,
It eased the shock of afflictions upon me,
That though broken I am not in their bitterness lonely.

Indeed, if a distress is widespread, its bad impact on an individual is easier to bear than when it afflicts only that certain individual. This is restricted to worldly calamities. As for the crisis of the Hereafter, nothing eases nor lightens it: 'On that Day it will not profit you in the least...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 39), i.e. the Day of Judgment, '... [to know] that, since you have sinned [together], you are now to share your suffering [as well]'. (*az-Zukhruf*: 39)

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- (1) Al-Khansa` is the nickname of the female Companion Tumadir bint `Amr ibn Al-Harith, from the tribe of Bani Salim of Najd. She lived most of her life in the pre-Islamic age of ignorance but reached the days of Islam and entered it and managed to visit the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. Most her poetry and the best of it was her elegy about her brothers Sakhr and Mu`awiya. She had four sons who fought at the Battle of *Qadisiyya* (16 AH). She kept urging them to fight courageously for Allah's Cause till they were all killed, at which she said, 'All praise is for Allah who honoured me by their deaths.' She passed away in 24 A.H. Az-Zirikli, *Al-A`lam*.
- (2) These two verses are from a 15-couplets poem of Al-Khansa` from the metre '*Al-Wafir*'. After she produced the first couplet, she imagined that someone said to her, 'You have equalled your brother to the dead brothers of common people. How can you show more concern over them than your brothers? Thus, she guarded against this by saying, 'And though they weep not like my brother but, reassuring myself over him, I seek to console me.'



أَفَأَنْتَ تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ أَوْ تَهْدِي الْأَعْمَى وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

**Can you [Prophet] make the deaf hear? Or guide
either the blind or those who are in gross error? [40]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 40)**

This verse is addressed to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* it means: ‘O Muhammad, conserve your energy and do not fatigue yourself nor take excessive pains trying to guide these people’.

Allah described them as deaf and blind, while they could, in reality, see and hear. Nevertheless, they heard the truth but they did not follow it and they saw the straightway but they did not adopt it. Thus, they are like the deaf man who cannot hear and the blind man who cannot see. Therefore, Allah said of them in another verse, ‘...Yet, verily, it is not their eyes that have become blind – but blind have become the hearts that are in their breasts!’ (*al-Hajj*: 46) So, these people are stubborn and arrogant and denying the truth. This is the meaning of error in His saying ‘or he who is in clear error?’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 40) Can there be an error clearer or more obvious than that of the one who sees the truth but does not follow it?


The True Lord *Glorified is He* would not address Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* in this way, had he not actually been overexerting himself such that he was on the verge of working himself to death in order to save them. For this reason, his Lord addresses him thus: ‘But would you, perhaps, torment thyself to death with grief over them if they are not willing to believe in this message?’ (*al-Kahf*: 6) He also says, ‘...you are not bound to do more than deliver the message...’ (*ash-Shura*: 48). This was because of the deep love that the Messenger Muhammad had for the divine message, the prophetic methodology, and his *ummah* in its entirety. He wanted them to taste, as he did, the sweetness of faith, thus, applying to himself his saying: ‘...love for your brother what you love for yourself.’

 فَإِنَّمَا نَذْهَبَنَّ بِكَ فَإِنَّا مِنْهُمْ مُنْتَقِمُونَ [٤١]
 أَوْ نُرِيَنَّكَ الَّذِي وَعَدْتَهُمْ فَإِنَّا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّقْتَدِرُونَ [٤٢]

**Either We shall take you away and punish them – indeed
 We will [41] or We shall let you witness the punishment We
 threatened them with; We have full power over them [42]
 (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 41- 42)**


That is to say, ‘Be at peace O Muhammad. For if you die, We shall show you Our revenge upon them and their punishment in the afterlife, and if you continue living you will see some of their punishment visited upon them in this world.

His saying: ‘...what We have promised them...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 42) refers to the punishment of this world, before the punishment of the Hereafter. The word *muqtadirun* (having full power) in His saying: ‘...verily, We have full power over them!’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 42), is a form of hyperbole of the word *qadir* (powerful). Hence it means, ‘We have complete control over them and are completely capable of inflicting punishment upon them. There shall be no escape for them’.

 فَاسْتَمْسِكْ بِالَّذِي أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ إِنَّكَ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ [٤٣]

**Hold fast to what has been revealed to you – you truly
 are on the right path [43] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 43)**

This verse means to adhere rigorously to the revelation you receive, and to not be deceived by those who turn away from Allah’s religion because you are upon truth, while they are upon falsehood. The meaning of ‘...behold, thou art on a straight way’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 43) is the true and middle course

 وَإِنَّهُ لَذِكْرٌ لَّكَ وَلِقَوْمِكَ وَسَوْفَ تُسْأَلُونَ [٤٤]

**For it is a reminder for you and your people: you will
 all be questioned [44] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 44)**

His saying, ‘...and, verily, this...’ refers to the Holy Quran with which the Prophet Muhammad was sent. This Book contains a complete way of life and

is a lasting miracle, enduring until the Day of Judgement. This Quran ‘...shall indeed become [a source of] eminence for thee and thy people...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 44), i.e. an honour and a source of greatness and pride for both you and your people, the Arabs because it was revealed in Arabic. How many a people have been distinguished by a great language?⁽¹⁾ It is an honour for the Arabic language and an honour for every Arab that the Quran should be revealed in their language. Human beings by their nature incline to boasting, to the love of prestige and to the spread of their fame. It is not hidden from anyone nowadays that it was the Quran that has given the Arabic language its high position among the languages of the world. Had it not been for the Quran, Arabic would have drifted into oblivion as many languages before it. Moreover, we find that there are many people from other nations that take it upon themselves to learn and perfect their Arabic to help them memorise the Quran and study its meanings and exegesis

وَسَلِّ مَنْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رُسُلِنَا أَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ
دُونِ الرَّحْمَنِ إِلَهًا يُعْبَدُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

**Ask the prophets We sent before you: ‘Did
We ever appoint any gods to be worshipped
besides the Lord of Mercy?’ [45]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 45)**

Let us now pause to reflect upon the verse: ‘...ask any of Our apostles whom We sent forth before thy time...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 45). How can Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* ask them when they have passed away? Why does his Lord *Glorified is He* tell him to do this? If the True Lord orders His Messenger to do something, then surely he can but obey.

Indeed, the True Lord *Glorified is He* gave Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* this opportunity when he went on the Night Journey and Ascension when he did meet with his brethren, the previous prophets. He led them in prayer in the Holy Mosque of Jerusalem, even though they had already died and he was alive.

(1) Said by the poet Hafizh Ibrahim

It is well established that he spoke to some of them and they spoke back. He spoke to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and consulted him regarding the fifty prayers, the result of which was that Allah reduced them to five.⁽¹⁾

If you are saying, 'How can two opposites exist at the same time? How could, living and dead people talk and consult together'? We say that this is possible because of Allah's Immeasurable Power. His Power is not limited by the normal laws of life and death. We have stated previously that in order to have peace of mind, we must attribute the action to the 'true doer'. This is a matter of the Unseen world; we have faith in it and attribute its wondrous aspects to the One who created them.

You remember the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* when they threw him in the fire. What happened? The empirical law tells us that fire burns, but what if Allah wants it to be cool and safe even as it is alight? When Allah willed it, it became cool and peaceful for Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and its law of burning was stopped. Had Allah *Glorified is He* wished clouds to rain on this fire and put it out, indeed He could have done so. Also, He could have saved Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* from them in such a way that they never would have caught him. But in order to manifest this miracle, Allah allowed them to catch him and literally throw him in a burning fire, but it did not burn him. This is Allah's Immeasurable Power.

We also witness this infinite power in the story of Musa's (Moses's) *peace be upon him* staff when he struck the sea with it and the sea parted. The water froze such that each side looked like a huge mountain. This was the same stick with which he struck the rock from which twelve streams sprang. The True Lord shows us glimpses of His Immense Power in these contraventions of the normal empirical rules so that we might carry that understanding further.

(1) *Al-Bukhari related it in his Sahih [336] on the authority of Anas ibn Malik that the Messenger of Allah peace and blessing be upon him said: 'Allah required of my ummah that they pray 50 times, so I returned with this until I met Musa (Moses) peace be upon him who said to me, "What did Allah oblige your ummah to do?" "He requires of them 50 prayers", I replied. "Go back to your Lord", he said, "for your ummah will not be able to bear it" ... and so the Hadith continues until Allah said: "...They are five and yet they are fifty. There will be no substitution of My speech."' This is also in Sahih Muslim [234].*

Some scholars have considered this unlikely, i.e. the meeting of the dead and the living; they interpret the events in such a way that agrees with their desires, saying that it means, 'ask the followers of the messengers that preceded you' because they took their religion from them. Those who think this way want to avoid the issue of the dead meeting the living and from the affirmation of a miracle that breaks the norms. Nevertheless, there is nothing strange about this nor is it too amazing because who is doing it? It is Allah.

Or, the question: '...ask any of Our apostles whom We sent forth before thy time...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 45) is not intended to express the direct literal meaning of a question that requires an answer, but rather, it is intended as a sermon and a call to consideration, such as the preacher says to the audience at the Friday Prayer for instance: 'Ask the earth who made the rivers flow over it, who made the plants grow on it; ask the budding gardens; ask the flowing water?' etc. The point here is not that we ask the earth, rather, we ask ourselves, we think and reflect. So, it is the case with His saying: '...ask any of Our apostles whom We sent forth before thy time...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 45).

Nevertheless, the question still arises, did Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* ask the other messengers who preceded him the question⁽¹⁾: '...whether We have ever allowed that deities other than the Most Gracious be worshipped' (*az-Zukhruf*: 45) or not? The reality is that he did not ask. But why did he not? Because he had certainty that obviated any need for him to ask this question. Messenger Muhammad had no need of anyone to confirm for him that there are no other gods to be worshipped beside Allah.

(1) *Al-Qurtubi stated in his Tafsir [9/6142]: 'The commentators have differed regarding the issue of the Prophet peace and blessing be upon him asking the previous prophets into two camps: The first is that he asked them and they replied, 'We were sent proclaiming Divine unity.' This was the position of Al-Waqidi. The second is that he did not ask them because of his certainty in Allah Glorified is He. Indeed, Ibn `Abbas and Ibn Zayd stated that the Messenger of Allah peace and blessing be upon him having finished praying with the prophets in the Holy Mosque of Jerusalem on the night of the Night Journey and Ascension was told by Jibril (Gabriel) peace be upon him: 'Ask, O Muhammad, those we sent before you of the messengers if we set up any gods other than Allah to be worshipped.' To which the Messenger of Allah replied: 'I am content. I am not going to ask.' This was mentioned by Ibn Al-Jawzi in Zad Al-Masir who said, 'it was related by `Ata from Ibn `Abbas.' This opinion was held by Sa`id ibn Jubayr, Az-Zuhri and Ibn Zayd.*

In this vein, it is related that `Ali *Allah be pleased with him* said: 'Were the veil to be lifted from my eyes, I would not increase in certainty.' That is, 'I have strong and unshakeable faith in the matters of the Unseen such that it is as though I see them. Were they to actually be revealed to me, my certainty would not increase one iota, because Allah's informing His Messenger of something is more credible to us than our seeing it.'

Read Allah's saying: 'Did you not see how thy Sustainer dealt with the Army of the Elephant?' (*al-Fil*: 1) It is well-known that the Messenger Muhammad was born in the Year of the Elephant, so he did not see it. Nevertheless, Allah says, 'Did you not see...' (*al-Fil*: 1) meaning 'Did you not know'? How did you know it? Either by means of your own senses or by revelation from the Creator of your senses, hence, revelation from the True Lord is more credible and more certain than one's own eyesight.

As for the question, inherent in: '...whether We have ever allowed that deities other than The Most Gracious be worshipped' (*az-Zukhruf*: 45), it serves the purpose of negation and rebuttal. Worshipping others beside Allah is not something that the messengers did or taught others. So, it must have originated at the hands of men. They invented this to please themselves in that they might have something to worship but would agree with their desires, and that would not constrict their wishes or passions according to rules of 'do this and do not do that'. This is how they came to worship idols, the sun, moon, planets, and other things. All these things were worshipped according to them, but Allah has not legislated this in any of the Divine Laws nor has He given any permission for such.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ
وَمَلَائِكِهِ فَقَالَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

**We sent Moses to Pharaoh and his courtiers and he said,
'I am truly a messenger from the Lord of the Worlds' [46]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 46)**

We have said previously that the 'messages' (*ayat*) mentioned here are the miracles that prove the truthfulness of the messenger in his transmission from

Allah. Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was, amongst all the messengers, bestowed with the most miracles, and from this we can infer that his people were the most stubborn and heedless amongst Allah's creation. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And, indeed, We gave unto Musa (Moses) nine clear messages' (*al-Isra'*: 101).

Why did the Quran mention part of the story of Musa (Moses) at this point? The scholars say it is because the disbelievers of Mecca had consolidated their position in opposition to the invitation to Islam. They rejected that this invitation should come to them at the hands of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* specifically. 'And they say, too, "Why was not this Quran bestowed from on high on some great man of the two cities?"' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) This meant the city of Mecca, in which there was Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira, and the city of Ta'if, in which there was 'Urwa ibn Mas'ud Ath-Thaqafi, along with other leaders of the people and the rich and respected. Thus, they were not objecting to the Quran; rather, they were objecting to the person to whom the Quran was revealed. For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to give an example from the life of the prophets: this is Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* he had no authority, and was not rich or high-ranking, but Allah sent him to people whose disbelief was worse than that of the people of Mecca and its leaders; he was sent to Pharaoh who not only rejected the invitation to Allah but actually said, 'I am a god!'

Thus, there is no astonishment that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent by Allah, even though he was from the public and the poor, to the rich leaders. Can it be said that Al-Walid and 'Urwa and the others leaders of disbelief were worse than Pharaoh? Prophet hood is, thus, not something that requires the messenger to be wealthy, famous or powerful. This is Allah's Mercy; He apportions it as He pleases and He elects of His slaves whom He will.

Considering the history of the prophet hood of both Muhammad and Musa (Moses) *peace be upon them* one finds that Musa (Moses) spent less time living in his community than Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did. Musa (Moses) was brought up in Pharaoh's household until he was a young man and it was then that Musa (Moses) accidentally killed somebody. Then, a man came to him from the far side of the town to warn him saying: 'and [then and there] a man came running from the farthest end of the city, and said:

“O Musa (Moses)! Behold, the great ones [of the kingdom] are deliberating upon thy case with a view to kill you! So leave, verily, I am of those who wish you well!” So he went forth from thence, looking fearfully about him, and prayed: “O my Sustainer! Save me from all evildoing folk!” (*al-Qasas*: 20-21)

After that, Musa (Moses) went to Midyan where he found: ‘Now when he arrived at the wells of Midyan⁽¹⁾, he found there a large group of men who were watering [their herds and flocks]; and at some distance from them he came upon two women who were keeping back their flock. He asked [them]: “What is the matter with you?” They answered: “We cannot water [our animals] until the herdsmen drive [theirs] home – for [we are weak and] our father is a very old man.” So he watered [their flock] for them; and then he withdrew into the shade and prayed: “O my Sustainer! Verily, in dire need am I of any good which you may bestow upon me!”’ (*al-Qasas*: 23-24).

The first thing we can draw from these events is the proper etiquette for interacting with Muslim women: when and how they should leave their homes. The reason these two ladies left their house was that their father was a very old man and there was nobody to fulfil their needs for them.

Thus, a woman should not leave her house unless it is a necessity. If she does go out, she covers herself and goes modestly, not mixing with men. After that, it is the responsibility of the believing community to safeguard a woman’s rights and help her satisfy her needs because it is a society based on mercy and kinship among all the Muslims.

I remember⁽²⁾ the first time we travelled to Mecca in 1950; we lived in the house of a wealthy man who would volunteer to take us to work in his private car. One time, while we were driving, we saw in front of one of the houses a wooden board used for the preparation of bread but the door of the house was closed. He stopped, got out of the car, took the board, and drove off. When I asked him about this, he said: ‘By Allah, it is a custom of ours that when we see a closed door and there is something in front of it like that, we know that

(1) Midyan was a city, also known as Bayala that was in the north-west of the Arabian Peninsula. Its people were traders and Allah sent the Prophet Shu’aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* to them to incite them to trade honestly.

(2) The story of the man from Mecca in Saudi Arabia with the dough of the woman

the man of the house is out and the family needs something, so we do it for them'. The result of this was that the man took the board, filled it with bread and some other stuff, and returned it to its owners.

This is the meaning that we have learnt from this story of Musa (Moses): 'so he watered [their flock] for them...' (*al-Qasas*: 24).

Then, we go back to the story: '...and then he withdrew into the shade and prayed: "O my Lord! Verily, in dire need am I of any good which you may bestow upon me!"' (*al-Qasas*: 24) That is to say, Musa (Moses) was a poor man; he had no worldly possessions save his physical power. At that time, he was sitting in the shade of a tree with no home. Is there greater poverty or weakness than this? This shows us that he was a penniless man; he possessed nothing of this world. If we compare him to Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* we find that Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* lived longer amongst his people. He grew up among them since birth, he tended the sheep for them for a wage, and, when he grew older, he occupied himself with trading. He was the 'manager', so to speak, to Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* and he earned money.

So, despite this, Allah sent Musa (Moses), even though he was weaker than Muhammad, to Pharaoh who was stronger and more powerful than Al-Walid, 'Urwa and the others. Now, we can see why Musa (Moses) has been mentioned here: 'Thus, indeed, have We sent Musa (Moses) with Our messages unto Pharaoh and his great ones...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 46).

There was vulnerability in Musa's (Moses's) message to Pharaoh; this was that he had been raised in Pharaoh's house. Hence, the True Lord *Glorified is He* taught him how to approach Pharaoh when inviting him to Islam because Pharaoh was reminding Musa (Moses) of this favour. '...Did we not bring thee up among us when you were a child? And didst thou not spend among us years of thy [later] life?' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 18) So, Allah told Musa (Moses) to speak gently to Pharaoh: 'But speak unto him in a mild manner, so that he might bethink himself or [at least] be filled with apprehension.' (*Ta Ha*: 44)

As for his saying, '...with Our messages...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 46), it refers to the open miracles that accompanied Musa's (Moses's) message to assist him

and establish the truthfulness of his conveyance from Allah. We have mentioned previously that one of the conditions of a miracle is that it be a challenging such that none could have accomplished it and that it relates to matters that the people excel in, so that the challenge might be meaningful. For how could I challenge you regarding something you do not know or in which you have little competence.

Pharaoh's people were adept in magic; therefore, one of the miracles that Allah gave Musa (Moses) was that of his staff. Allah *Glorified is He* trained him to use it and taught him its secrets before he met Pharaoh. Read the verses: 'Now, what is this in thy right hand, O Musa (Moses)? He answered: "It is my staff; I lean on it; and with it I beat down leaves for my sheep; and [many] other uses have I for it." Allah said, "Throw it down, O Musa (Moses)!" So he threw it – and lo! it was a snake, moving rapidly.' (*Ta Ha*: 17-20) This situation was a training session for Musa (Moses) on the use of this miracle before Pharaoh. Thus, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* knew that, in addition to his own purposes of using his staff such as supporting himself and beating down leaves, Allah *Glorified is He* had designated it for other uses beside these normal ones.

We have heard some orientalists saying, 'The Quran repeats the story of Musa's (Moses's) staff in several places'. The reality, however, is that there is no repetition; rather, these are different situations regarding Musa's (Moses's) staff. The first time, as we said, was training for Musa (Moses) so that he would not be overawed by the transformation of the staff when he threw it before Pharaoh.

The second time was in front of Pharaoh alone, and the third time was when the sorcerers had been gathered by Pharaoh. Hence, there is no repetition: they are different instances of one action. The Quran, in revealing this story to us, has also shown us the difference between miracles and magic. Magic employs illusion and deception while a miracle is an actual occurrence. That is why Allah said of the staff: '...and lo! it was a snake, moving rapidly', i.e. really. When He spoke of the sorcerer's ropes however He said: '...[they] seemed to him to be moving rapidly' (*Ta Ha*: 66). Further proof of this is that when the sorcerers and those who practised these arts or had experience of

them saw the staff turn instantaneously into a snake, they fell into prostration, believing in Musa (Moses) and that which he brought because they knew best about these affairs. ‘...(They] exclaimed: “We have come to believe in The Lord of Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron)!”’ (*Ta Ha: 70*)

In another verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...they cast a spell upon the people’s eyes, and struck them with awe...’ (*al-A’raf: 116*). The meaning of ‘they cast a spell upon the people’s eyes’ is that this magic went no further than their eyes; it was merely an optical illusion.

Our daily life bears witness to this. I remember ⁽¹⁾ when I was the head of a mission from the University of Al-Azhar to Algeria. There, I met the Saudi Ambassador Riyadh Al-Khatib, the son of the great poet Fu’ad Al-Khatib ⁽²⁾, and we became good friends. It came to pass that he was transferred from Algeria to Pakistan and sometime after this, I also travelled to Pakistan and visited him there.

One day, we were talking about magic and he said, ‘I have something strange to show you. There is an Indian magician who does such-and-such and such-and-such.’ To this I replied, ‘By Allah, this is a good opportunity to see what this man does.’ The next morning, we went to the village and they brought the Indian magician who sat down and began to put on his show. He brought some cotton and twisted it so that it looked like a piece of rope. He had with him a young boy whom he instructed to climb the rope which he made until all the people seated around could see the boy had actually climbed this rope.

On the following day, having checked the Quran verses about magic in the Book of Allah, I took a camera with me in order to photograph this spectacle. This I did and, when then the following day I had the photographs developed, I found them white, nothing to be seen. My friend asked me,

(1) The story of Ash-Sheikh Ash-Sha’rawi and Riyadh Al-Khatib with the Indian sorcerer in Pakistan.

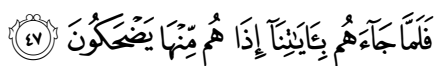
(2) Fu’ad ibn Hasan ibn Yusuf Al-Khatib, a poet with a pure elegant style and a master of rhetoric, a member of Al-Majma’ Al ‘Ilmi Al ‘Arabi in Damascus. He was born in 1879 C.E. near Beirut. He finished his studies at the American University in the year 1904 C.E. and was known as ‘the poet of the revolution of the Hijaz’. He passed away in his hometown of Shuheem in the year 1957 C.E. [his biography is given in detail in Az-Zirikli, *Al-A’lam*, 5/160].

‘How then do you interpret this illusion that we saw?’ I said, ‘By Allah, we know from the Quran that the jinn can take any form, and perhaps this magician is supported by the jinn. Allah says: ‘Yet [it has always happened] that certain kinds of humans would seek refuge with certain kinds of [such] jinn: but these only increased their confusion.’ (*al-Jinn*: 6). Thus, it is logically possible that this magician could have entered a pact with some *jinni* who assists him in this matter, taking whatever form he desires.

The Quran is explicit about the fact that the signs and miracles that Musa (Moses) was sent with were nine: ‘And, indeed, We gave unto Musa (Moses) nine clear signs...’ (*al-Isra*: 101). In another verse, Allah says, ‘Although each sign that We showed them was weightier than the preceding one...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 48). This means that they must have been many clear and obvious signs.

Regarding His saying: ‘...unto Pharaoh and his great ones...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 46), ‘great ones’ (*al-mala*’) refers to the people but especially the notables and dignitaries amongst them. It comes from the saying, ‘*fulan mala`a al-`ayn*’ (so-and-so is pleasing). In another verse, Allah says, ‘and [thus, too, did We deal with] Qarun and Pharaoh, and Haman: to them had come Musa (Moses) with all evidence of the truth, but they behaved arrogantly on earth [and rejected him]; and withal, they could not escape [Us].’ (*al-`Ankabut*: 39)

As to Allah’s saying: ‘...and he said: “Behold, I am an apostle of the Lord of all the Worlds!”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 46), it is an abridgement of his message and a summary thereof.



**But when he presented Our signs to them, they
laughed [47] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 47)**

The previous verse in the chapter of *al-`Ankabut* clarified their reaction which is arrogance. Arrogance, here, means that they knew Musa (Moses) was truthful and a man of miracles, yet they were too proud to believe in him. Here, this verse clarifies another aspect of their arrogance: ‘...lo! they derided them’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 47). Either this laughter was out of astonishment at the miracle they saw, being a breaking of the norms and different from all they had seen from the sorcerers beforehand, or it was out of derision and mockery.

وَمَا نُزَيِّهِمْ مِنْ آيَةٍ إِلَّا هِيَ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ أُخْتِهَا
وَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

**Even though each sign We showed them was greater
than the previous one. We inflicted torment on them so
that they might return to the right path [48]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 48)**

The meaning of ‘... each sign...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 48) here is a miracle. ‘...was weightier than the preceding one...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 48), i.e. each miracle was clearer and grander than its forerunner. This also means that the miraculous nature of these signs was clear in each instance because they were so numerous. Each sign or miracle was great in one way or another because the purpose of the signs was their miraculous incapacitating nature, doing something beyond the realms of human power or possibility; so long as a sign performed this duty, it must be considered great.

As for His saying: ‘...We took them to task over the Punishment through suffering...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 48), it means, ‘We punished them over their rejection of the punishment of the next world. The True Lord *Glorified is He* has explained this punishment in another chapter saying: ‘And most certainly did We overwhelm Pharaoh’s people with drought and scarcity of fruits, so that they might take it to heart’ (*al-A’raf*: 130).

Consider the endings of these two verses: the first: ‘...so that they might return [to Us]’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 48), and the other: ‘...so that they might take it to heart.’ (*al-A’raf*: 130) So, The True Lord *Glorified is He* does not punish His creation because He needs to; He only punishes them so that they may turn back to Him. Hence, we can see that even His punishment here is a mercy for them.

He was harsh so they would take heed, and whoever is judicious,

Let him sometimes be harsh on those he would show mercy.⁽¹⁾

(1) This couplet is from a poem by Abu Tammam in the *Kamil* metre. It has 60 couplets of which this is the 39th. Abu Tammam was Habib ibn Aws At-Ta’I, and he was born in Syria in 188 AH. His poetry has a powerful and pure style. He wrote several books including, *Fuhul Ash-Shu’ara*, *Diwan Al-Hamasa* and *Naqa’id Jarir Wa Al-Akhtal*. He passed away in the year 231 A.H. *Al-Mawsu’a Ash-Shi’riyya*

His saying: ‘...so that they might return [to Us]’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 48), i.e. return to us by getting rid of arrogance, false argumentation and the stubbornness. But did they turn back? Not at all, they persisted in their denial and disbelief, even after Allah afflicted them, for many years, by drought and famine, resulting in the loss of the fruits of their labour and suffering from a constrained livelihood. Then, after all of that: ‘Thereupon We let loose upon them floods, and [plagues of] locusts, and lice⁽¹⁾, and frogs, and [water turning into] blood – distinct signs [all]: but they gloried in their arrogance, for they were people lost in sin’ (*al-A`raf*: 133). These were clear and obvious signs. As a result, they found themselves most terribly constrained, emaciated, and extremely busy affording their daily provision. Therefore, they went to Musa (Moses) and said:

وَقَالُوا يَتَّيْنُهُ السَّاحِرُ أَدْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ إِنَّا لَمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

They said, ‘Sorcerer, call on your Lord for us, by virtue of His pledge to you: we shall certainly accept guidance’ [49]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 49)

The word sorcerer here does not only mean that they were admitting his superiority in the field of magic, but it also means a man who is proficient in all things; someone who is their superior in magic, knowledge and understanding of the affairs of this world; it means he was unique.

This reminds us of an occurrence in the life of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* Az-Zabraqaan ibn Badr⁽²⁾ and `Amr ibn

(1) Ibn Jawzi said in *Zad Al-Masir* [Al-A`raf 133] that there are seven positions regarding *al-qumal* (lice):

1. That they were woodworms.
 2. That they were nymphs, i.e. baby locusts. This was the position of Mujahid, `Ata` and Ibn `Abbas.
 3. That they were small black insects.
 4. That they were dung-beetles.
 5. That they were lice.
 6. That they were fleas.
 7. That they were *hamnan*, a type of tick. This was the position of Abu `Ubayda.
- (2) Az-Zabraqaan ibn Badr At-Tamimi As-Sa`di was a companion and a leader among his people. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* put him in charge of=

Al-Ahtam⁽¹⁾, two of the leaders of the Arabs, came to him. The Prophet Muhammad said to 'Amr ibn Al-Ahtam: 'What do you say of Az-Zabraqaan ibn Badr?' 'Amr ibn Al-Ahtam replied: 'He is obeyed by his people, powerful, smart and prudent⁽²⁾, and is capable of protecting his people.' Az-Zabraqaan added: 'O Messenger of Allah, By Allah, he certainly knows more of me than he has given in this description, but he is envious of me.' To this 'Amr replied: 'By Allah, O Messenger of Allah, he is a man of little virtue⁽³⁾, weak-minded⁽⁴⁾, his imagination is twisted and his forefathers were idiots.'

At this, the Messenger Muhammad said to 'Amr ibn al-Ahtam, 'What caused you to say the things you have just said?' 'O Messenger of Allah', he said, 'I was cheerful so I said the best things I knew about him. Then I became angry, so I said the worst things I knew about him.' So, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* said, 'Indeed some speech can be bewitching' (*Inna min al-bayan lasihra*)⁽⁵⁾.'

The relation here is that the word *sihr* (magic or bewitching) can carry the meaning of superiority generally in any aspect of life. Therefore, when they saw Musa's actions, they humbled themselves before him and conceded that he was superior to them and, even though they did not believe in him, they conceded his pre-eminence. Indeed, because of the truthfulness of his call, they came to him and asked him to pray for them and to alleviate the afflictions they suffered in their livelihood.

= collecting the charity his people gave. He lost his sight at the end of his life and he passed away during the reign of Mu'awiya in the year 45 A.H. He was an eloquent poet but was somewhat coarse as the Bedouin Arabs tended to be. Az-Zirikli, *Al-A'lam* 3/41

(1) 'Amr ibn Al-Ahtam's full name was 'Amr ibn Sinan At-Tamimi Al-Manqari Abu Rib'i. He was one of leaders, poets, and orators in the pre-Islamic era and in Islam. He was from Najd and came to visit the Prophet *peace and blessing be upon him* whereupon he entered Islam. His poetry is good. He passed away in the year 57 A.H. Az-Zirikli, *Al-A'lam* 5/78

(2) Possessing ability, perceptiveness, patience, and sound judgement

(3) i.e., it is little.

(4) i.e., Impatient and slow when under pressure

(5) It was related by Al-Hakim in *Al-Mustadrak* [6645, 6646] on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas and Abu Bakra Al-Ansari, according to whom Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* said, 'Indeed, some oratory is bewitching, and some poetry contains wisdom.' It was also related by At-Tabarani in *Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir* [1820] (part of a lost manuscript) and also in *Al-Mu'jam As-Saghir* [7886]

They said: ‘...O thou sorcerer! Pray for us to thy Sustainer...’ (*az-Zukhruf: 49*). We can see, therefore, that they recognised he had a connection to his Lord. Nevertheless, they did not consider his Lord to be their Lord, the proof being their saying, ‘... Pray for us to thy Sustainer...’ (*az-Zukhruf: 49*). They did not for example say, ‘our Sustainer’ ‘...On the strength of the covenant [of prophet hood] which He has made with thee...’ (*az-Zukhruf: 49*) because your Lord consents to your wishes and does what you ask of Him, and He promised that He would remove the punishment from those who believe in you ‘...For, verily, we shall now follow the right way!’ (*az-Zukhruf: 49*); i.e. if you relieve us of the punishment that afflicts us, we will be guided believe in you.

فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابَ إِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

**But as soon as We relieved their torment they broke
their word [50] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf: 50*)**

So, their saying: ‘...for, verily, we shall now follow the right way!’ (*az-Zukhruf: 49*), was just empty words, spoken in hypocrisy; they had no portion of the truthful reality. This is obvious because although, the True Lord *Glorified is He* relieved them of the punishment, they just went back to their old ways. The meaning of ‘...they would break their word’ (*az-Zukhruf: 50*) is that they would return to what they were previously doing and break the oath they drew upon themselves that they would accept guidance.

وَنَادَىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ فِي قَوْمِهِ قَالَ يَبْقَوِي آلَ يَاسَ إِلَىٰ مُلْكِ مِصْرَ
وَهَٰذِهِ الْأَنْهَارُ تَجْرَىٰ مِن تَحْتِي ۖ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

**Pharaoh proclaimed to his people, ‘My people, is the
Kingdom of Egypt not mine? And these rivers that
flow at my feet, are they not mine? Do you not see? [51]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf: 51*)**

Now Pharaoh’s status amongst his people had become unstable and he sensed danger. When he saw the people looking to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* he felt that Musa (Moses) was pulling the rug from underneath his feet especially after the event when the sorcerers believed in the Lord of

Harun (Aaron) and Musa (Moses) without waiting for Pharaoh's permission. After the drought had befallen them and they turned in despair to Musa (Moses) and asked him to remove their affliction. For these reasons, we now see Pharaoh trying to re-establish himself and improve his image amongst his people.

‘And Pharaoh issued a call to his people...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 51); what did his crier call out? He cried out ‘... “O my people! Does the dominion over Egypt not belong to me since all these running waters⁽¹⁾ flow at my feet? Can you not, then, see?”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 51). That is, do not forget my status, my dominion and power over you, and do not concern yourselves with the affair of Musa (Moses) because I am still the king of Egypt, and the rivers run beneath me, i.e., I am the one who provides your blessings.

‘...Can you not, then, see? (*az-Zukhruf*: 51) We notice that his announcement contains nothing of his claim to divinity; he did not say, ‘I am your Lord Most High’ because he has abandoned such slogans now that there is no place for them after what happened with Musa (Moses).

Look now to the phrasing of his announcement: ‘...Does the dominion over Egypt not belong to me...?’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 51) It is a rhetorical question confirming his status as King of Egypt, i.e. ‘Tell me, am I not still your king’? He did not use, for instance, a plain statement such as, ‘I am the king of Egypt’, and we can see from this that Pharaoh is speaking from a position of weakness. This is clear because he was previously saying ‘...I am your Lord Most-High!’ (*an-Nazi‘at*: 24), and now he is saying, ‘...Does the dominion over Egypt not belong to me...?’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 51)

The word *mulk* (dominion) consists of the letters *mim*, *lam* and *kaf*. We see that sometimes this *mim* has a *kasra*, sometimes a *fatha* and others a

(1) There have been many opinions expressed about the meaning of *al-anhar* (running waters), amongst them:

- That they were four branches of the Nile: Nahr Al-Malik, Nahr Tulun, Nahr Damietta and Nahr Tanis.
- That they were generals, leaders, and tyrants who marched under his banner. This was the opinion of Ad-Dahhak.
- That they were his treasures and he spoke of them as such because of their visibility and abundance [*Tafsir Al-Qurtubi* 9/6145)] Sheikh Ash-Sha’rawi *Allah rest his soul* has more to say about this verse that will soon follow.

damma. When it has a *kasra* it says *milk* meaning anything one possesses. Even the clothes one wears are termed *milk*. The word *mulk*, with a *damma* refers to authority and control over those who have possessions (*milk*). *Malk* with a *fatha*, however, means choice or will, as in the verse: ‘...We did not break our promise to thee of our own free will...’ (*Ta Ha*: 87), that is, by our choice.

When we form an active participle (*ism al-fa'il*), we can say *maalik* or *malik*. *Malik* (owner) can be said of anyone, even if he only possesses his own clothes. As for *malik* (king), however, it is only said of one who rules and governs other owners.

When we read, for example, in the chapter of *al-Fatiha*: ‘Lord of the Day of Judgment!’ [*maliki yawm ad-din*] (*al-Fatiha*: 4), (it is translated into ‘Lord’ here, not ‘owner’) we do not say *malik*. It is true that this is one of the variant readings of the Quran⁽¹⁾, ‘King of the Day of Judgement’ (*maliki yawmi`-d-din*), but nevertheless, *malik* is the most common reading. What then is the wisdom in preferring a word of lesser meaning to a stronger one?

The scholars say that the True Lord *Glorified is He* chose the word *maalik* to establish that it is He Who owns the Day of Judgement, while others may possess the earth and what lies thereon in this life. So, His saying: ‘Lord of the Day of Judgment!’ (*maliki yawmi`-d-din*) (*al-Fatiha*: 4) means that none other than He holds ownership of this day. It is Allah’s alone. For this reason, He said: ‘...With whom will sovereignty rest on that Day? With Allah, The One Who holds absolute sway over all that exists!’ (*Ghafir*: 16); it is His alone, not other’s. Hence, the word *maalik* is required here; it is the word that

(1) The word *malik* can be recited in the chapter of *al-Fatiha* in several ways:

- *Malik* – related by `Asim, Al-Kasa`i, Khalaf and Ya`qub, *malik* with an *alif*.
- *Malika* – related by Ibn Samiqa` and Ibn Abu `Abla, as above except that the *kaf* is *mansub*.
- *Malki* – related by Abu Hurayra and `Asim Aj-Jahdari, with a *sukun* on the *lam*, no *alif* and a *kasra* on the *kaf*.
- *Malika* – related by Abu `Uthman An-Nahdi and Ash-Sha`bi, with a *kasra* on the *lam*, no *alif* and the *kaf* *mansub*.
- *Maliku* – related by Sa`d ibn Abu Waqqas, `Aisha and Muwarraq Al-`Ajali, as above except that the *kaf* is *marfu`*.
- *Malik* – related by Abu Raja` Al-`Ataridi. [Ibn Al-Jawzi, *Zad Al-Masir* – the chapter of *al-Fatiha*]

conveys the desired meaning. It is more indicative of the meaning, even though ownership is less than kingship.

As we mentioned previously, for example, concerning the words *kabir* (big) and *akbar* (bigger/biggest), *akbar* is a comparative adjective formed from *kabir* and its meaning is stronger. In the call to prayer, we say, ‘*Allahu akbar*’, but *akbar* is not one of Allah’s names, rather a name of His is *Al-Kabir* (the Great). Why then do we use *akbar* instead of *Al-Kabir*? The scholars say that there is wisdom behind why we say *Allahu Akbar* and that it is that the lesser word here finds its place. This is because when you are calling people to prayer you are asking them to leave their business. Legitimate work is the basis of people’s lives. People’s jobs and necessities are not insignificant things of no bearing in Allah’s religion. Rather, they are matters which are ordained by the Sacred Law.

Thus, work is important and essential, but when the time for prayer comes, be sure that Allah is Greater, i.e. greater than working and striving to earn livings.

This issue has been clarified for us by the True Lord *Glorified is He* 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, hasten to the remembrance of Allah, and leave all worldly commerce...’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 9). Then: ‘And when the prayer is ended, disperse freely on earth and seek to obtain [something] of Allah’s bounty...’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 10).

So, Allah removes you from your work to pray and then He returns you back again because through work the earth is populated and the needs of creation are addressed. Then, we can see that the desired meaning is best articulated by the word *akbar* (Greater).

‘And Pharaoh issued a call to his people...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 51); it was not Pharaoh himself who called out, but rather, he ordered that this announcement should be made amongst the people, and hence, because the announcement was made on his orders, it was attributed to him.

His saying: ‘...Does the dominion over Egypt not belong to me...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 51) refers to the whole country, not just the capital city as we say

today when using the word *Misr* to refer to Cairo. *Misr* (Ancient Egypt) that Pharaoh ruled stretched from Alexandria to Aswan.

Misr is a proper name for this place; the word is comprised of three letters, the first of which bears a *kasra* and the middle one bears a *sukun*. A *sukun* makes the pronunciation of a word light and so this word is easy to utter. Furthermore, it has the simplest form that a noun can take in the language because the noun in Arabic can have no less than three letters, while the most is five letters if it is stripped of any ancillary letters.

Reflecting in this regard, we can see that Mecca, Allah's Sacred City and the place of his Sacred House, is mentioned in the Gracious Book twice: 'And He it is who, in the valley of Mecca, stayed their hands from you, and your hands from them...' (*al-Fath*: 24), and in His saying: 'Behold, the first house ever set up for mankind was indeed the one at *Bakka*: rich in blessing, and a [source of] guidance unto all the worlds' (*Al-'Imran*: 96), it comes by the name of *Bakka*.

As for *Misr (Egypt)*, it is mentioned by the True Lord *Glorified is He* in His Book five times: '...Does the dominion over Egypt not belong to me...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 51), in: 'And the man from Egypt who bought him said...' (*Yusuf*: 21), in: '...Enter Egypt! If Allah so wills, you shall be secure [from all evil]!' (*Yusuf*: 99), in: 'and [thus] did We inspire Musa (Moses) and his brother: "Set aside⁽¹⁾ for your people some houses in the city..."' (*Yunus*: 87) and in: '...Go back in shame to Egypt, and then you can have what you are asking for...' (*al-Baqara*: 61).

In the last verse *Misr* is mentioned with a *fatha* at the end and a *tanwin* (*Misran*). Some of the exegetes say that this is because it means 'a city among others, inside it is that which you desire'. Even if we accept this interpretation, then Ancient Egypt is still included in it because it was a city among others.

'...all these running waters flow at my feet...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 51): the words '...at my feet...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 51) indicate authority and power. Indeed, his

(1) *Tabawwa`at al-manzil* means he took a house as his residence. The meaning of Allah's saying, 'And [thus] did We inspire Musa (Moses) and his brother: "Set aside for your people some houses in the city..."' (*Yunus*: 87), is 'go and take up residence there' [Al-Qamus Al-Qawim 1/88].

palaces were built directly on the Nile bank and the river was running beneath them. He used the plural of rivers even though we know that there is but one river in Egypt, the River Nile, and that it splits into two, the Damietta branch and the Rosetta branch. So, why did the verse say: ‘...all these running waters...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 51)?

The scholars say that this is because in the days of the Pharaohs there were five rivers, that is, they created five branches from the river so that there would be more shores. Thus, they had ten shores on which they built their palaces.

I remember⁽¹⁾ here that we had an esteemed sheikh; Sheikh ‘Umar Al-‘Amrusi from the city Tanta Al-Jazira. I used to sit with him and benefit from his knowledge, along with Sheikh Sayyid Sharaf and Dr Yasin ‘Abd Al-Ghaffar⁽²⁾. One day he asked me, knowing that I was studying at Al-Azhar, ‘O Sha’rawi, what do you know of the verse: “...all these running waters flow at my feet...” (*az-Zukhruf*: 51)? I replied, ‘In history we read that during the days of the pharaohs there were five rivers, one river named Al-Malik (the king) because the king’s palace was upon its shore, one named Dimyat and a river named Tannis.⁽³⁾ But we found it strange that there was one river named Tulun, given that we know that Ahmad ibn Tulun⁽⁴⁾ was in the ninth century CE, so how did it get that name? After researching, we found that it was Ibn

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- (1) The story of Sheikh ‘Umar Al-‘Amrusi and his asking Ash-Sheikh Ash-Sha’rawi *may Allah rest their souls* about the rivers
 - (2) Dr Yasin ‘Abd Al-Ghaffar established The Liver Institute (Ma’had Al-Kabid) in 1990 CE. He is from the governorate of Al-Manufiyya and was born on the 26th January 1917 CE and passed away in May 1999 CE at the age of 82. He received his degree in medicine and surgery in 1940 CE and membership of the Royal Society in London in 1944. He took his doctorate from Cairo University in 1945 and received an honorary doctorate from Alexandria University in 1991. He was given numerous positions and achieved many distinctions.
 - (3) Tannis is an ancient city. It is a word from Hieroglyphics referring to the making of silk. It is now the city Al-Manzila, one of the centres of governorate of Ad-Daqhaliyya in the north east of Egypt.
 - (4) Ahmad ibn Tulun Abu Al-‘Abbas Al-Amir was well-known in Egypt, in the Levant and in the frontier outposts. His roots were Turkish, but he was Arabised. He was born in the year 220 A.H. and was courageous, lived a good life and was described as a fierce opponent. He built the well-known mosque in Cairo and Qala’a Yafa in Palestine. It is said against him that he was hot-tempered. He passed away in Egypt after being ill in the year 270 A.H. at the age of 51 *Az-Zirikli Al-A’lam* 1/140.

Tulun who filled this branch of the river in and so it was named after him. The fifth river was named Al-Khalij. They created extra branches from the main river so that they would have more space to extend the building along the river, and this, if it is an indication of anything, shows the luxurious nature of their lifestyles at that time.'

As for Sheikh `Umar, he had a different opinion about the meaning of this verse. 'Listen my sons', he said, 'the pharaohs organised Ancient Egypt in such a way as to imitate the organisation of paradise, thus they created four rivers. Listen to the Quran: '...The parable of the Paradise which the Allah-conscious are promised – [a paradise] wherein there are rivers of water which time does not corrupt, and rivers of milk the taste whereof never alters, and rivers of wine delightful to those who drink it, and rivers of honey of all impurity cleansed...' (*Muhammad*: 15).


The question is, where did the Pharaohs get this knowledge of paradise from, such that they could adapt it to the land of Egypt? The scholars say that they used to take their lead from their priests in their worldly affairs and politics. These soothsayers had some knowledge and studied the previous revelations. The scholars even say that the knowledge that the pharaohs had and used to build the pyramids, the sphinx, the temples that are still standing now, the secrets of the construction of which, despite all the advances in science, we still have not uncovered, the process of mummification and other secrets, they learnt it all from the soothsayers. That knowledge, so long as it came from the soothsayers, had its origin in revelation. The proof of this is that when the era of the soothsayers ended and they were no longer to be found, this knowledge disappeared, even until now.

I remember when, during the governance of the architect Hasbullah Al-Kafrawi⁽¹⁾, I suggested to him the re-digging of these rivers, such that all of them would meet at the Barrages so that we could increase the area of shores for ourselves. I suggested that, in order to solve the housing crisis,

(1) He was from the town of Kafr Sulaiman, in the governorate of Kafr Sa'd in the governorate of Damietta. He gained a degree in civil engineering from the University of Alexandria in the year 1950 CE. He was a former Minister of Housing for 16 years from 1977 to 1993. He was appointed the governor of Damietta in 1976, the Urban Communities Authority in 1980, and the syndic of the Engineering Syndicate in 1991.

instead of building on arable land, we could build residences and government buildings over the branches of the waterways and canals because they occupy a considerably large area. Most of these waterways have paths on the right and left sides and we could build reinforced pillars upon the canals and build all the government institutions on them instead of cramming them together in the capital. He promised me that he would study these suggestions, but nothing ever came of it.

Regarding the verse: ‘...all these running waters flow at my feet...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 51), the exegetes say that these rivers literally ran right under his palaces. They said that he even made a stream flow underneath the bed in which he slept.⁽¹⁾


 أَمْ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْ هَٰذَا الَّذِي هُوَ مَهِينٌ وَلَا يَكَادُ يُبِينُ

Am I not better than this contemptible wretch
who can scarcely express himself? [52]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 52)

Pharaoh compares himself to Musa (Moses) trying to establish his superiority saying, ‘Am I not better than this one’ meaning Musa (Moses); Pharaoh referred to Musa (Moses) using the demonstrative ‘this’ out of contempt. *Mahin* (contemptible) means, weak and disdained because Musa (Moses) was neither able to protect himself, nor did he have an army to defend him.

‘...who can scarcely express himself?’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 52) It means that he cannot communicate and express himself, and speak eloquently or fluently because he had lisp. Thus, he asked his Lord to assist him in this matter by sending his brother Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* with him. ‘And my brother Harun (Aaron) is more fluent than me in tongue, so send him with me as support⁽²⁾, verifying me. Indeed, I fear that they will deny me.’ (*al-Qasas*: 34)

(1) Al-Alusi mentioned it in *Ruh Al-Ma`ani*. He said, ‘More than one has said that the rivers branched off from the Nile and flowed beneath his palace where he could watch them. It is also said that he had a huge raised bed under which streams branching off from the Nile flowed.

(2) *Ar-Rid`* means assistant or supporter [*Al-Qamus Al-Qawim*, 1/260]. The word ‘*arda`adu`*’ means that he helped him. *Tarada` al-qawm* means that the people helped each other,=

It is related that the cause of this lisp was that when Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was young, he made a bold remark against Pharaoh, which resulted in Pharaoh doubting and fearing Musa (Moses). His people said to him that Musa (Moses) was only a child who does not realise what he was saying. In order to prove their opinion, they brought Musa (Moses) a date and an ember, but he took the ember which burnt his tongue and resulted in this lisp.⁽¹⁾

فَلَوْلَا أُلْقِيَ عَلَيْهِ أَسْوِرَةٌ مِّنْ ذَهَبٍ أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ
الْمَلَائِكَةُ مُقَرَّرِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

**Why has he not been given any gold bracelets?
Why have no angels come to accompany him? [53]
(The Quran, az-Zukhruf: 53)**

Pharaoh's materialistic conception of a messenger is that he comes clad in golden bracelets to prove his strength, power, and greatness, or that he should come accompanied by angels to affirm him and attest to his truthfulness.

فَاسْتَحَفَّ قَوْمَهُ، فَاطَاعُوهُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَسِيقِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾

**In this way he moved his people to accept and
they obeyed him – they were perverse people [54]
(The Quran, az-Zukhruf: 54)**

Al-Istikhfaf refers to haste, frivolity, and lack of reflection in one's affairs. Pharaoh moved his people to accept his speech and his people obeyed him and followed his misguidance. No one agrees to corruption except the one who benefits from it. In addition, it could mean that he found the people predisposed to frivolity, imprudence and a general lack of deliberation concerning their affairs, so he lied to them.

= and 'fulan rid' li fulan' means that so-and-so assists so-and-so and supports him [*Lisan Al-'Arab* under *rada'*].

(1) Ibn Kathir mentioned it in his *Tafsir of Allah's saying: 'And my brother Harun (Aaron) is more fluent than me in tongue...' (Saba': 52)*. Ibn Al-Mundhir related on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas regarding Allah's saying: '...who can scarcely express himself?' (*az-Zukhruf: 52*), that Musa (Moses) had a lisp. Ash-Shawkani also mentioned it in *Fath Al-Qadir* and *As-Suyuti in Ad-Dur Al-Manthur*.

فَلَمَّا أَصَفُونَا أَنْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَأَعْرَفْنَاهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ
فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ سَلَفًا وَمَثَلًا لِلْآخِرِينَ

**When they provoked Us, We punished and drowned them
all [55] We made them a lesson and an example for later
people [56] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 55 - 56)**

The word *asafuna* means ‘provokes us’, the result of which was: ‘...We punished...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 55); this punishment was inflicted by drowning them all. Thus, Allah made them an example and lesson for later people. ‘*Ibra lil`akhirin*’, which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, means an example for other disbelievers.

وَلَمَّا ضُرِبَ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ مَثَلًا إِذَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْهُ يَصِدُّونَ

**When the son of Mary is cited as an example,
your people [Prophet] laugh and jeer [57]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 57)**

The verb in this verse, *duriba* (is cited as an example), is in the passive voice. Who cites the son of Maryam (Mary) as an example? It was Allah who cites the son of Maryam (Mary) as an example because he was born of with no father. He was formed by Allah blowing His Spirit into Maryam (Mary). Thus, the Christians attributed him to Allah, Who is too Exalted to have sons. Allah refuted them by saying that the creation of `Isa (Jesus) was like that of Adam *peace be upon them*.

‘Indeed, the example of `Isa (Jesus) to Allah is like that of Adam. He created Him from dust; then He said to him, “Be,” and he was.’ (*Al-`Imran*: 59) `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* had no father, but Adam had neither father nor mother, and the one who can do a difficult action can of course make a less difficult one. Thus, they should be tempted by it.

After the revelation of Allah’s saying: ‘Indeed, you [disbelievers] and what you worship other than Allah are the firewood of hell. You will be coming to [enter] it.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 98) It has become clear that anyone who worships others beside Allah has strayed, will be along with his god: ‘...the firewood of Hell...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 98) that kindles it.

A man named `Abdullah ibn Az-Zab`ary came to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* before embracing Islam and said, 'O Muhammad, are these verses just for us or for all created beings?' He replied, 'For all created beings.' `Abdullah said, 'How can this be when `Isa (Jesus), `Uzayr (Ezra) and the angels were worshipped besides Allah? Will they and their worshippers be admitted into the Fire?'⁽¹⁾ Then, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not reply to him until the revelation of Allah's saying: 'Indeed, those for whom the best [reward] has preceded from Us - they are from it far removed.' (*al-Anbiya*: 101)

When `Ali *Allah be pleased with him* was informed with this incident, he said that the Arabic word *ma* (that) is used in Arabic to refer to inanimate beings and animals, so it does not include `Isa (Jesus), `Uzayr (Ezra) or the angels. This reveals `Ali's wisdom, as he was brought up and educated by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* since he was young. He gained knowledge from the light of prophet hood. Thus, Prophet Muhammad said, 'I am the city of knowledge whose gate is `Ali.'⁽²⁾

`Ali was one of the great jurists who derived legal rulings with deep insight, even in the company of the greatest Companions. Although a verse in the Quran was revealed corresponding to `Umar ibn Al-Khattab's opinion, `Umar

(1) *Ar-Razi mentioned in his exegesis, Mafatih Al-Ghayb, when explaining the chapter of Al-Anbiya, `Abdullah ibn Az-Zab`ari approached and saw the polytheists of Quraysh whispering to each other, so he asked them, 'What are you discussing?' Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira informed him of the Messenger of Allah's saying, '... Indeed, you [disbelievers] and what you worship other than Allah are the firewood of Hell...' (al-Anbiya': 98). At this `Abdullah said, 'Truly, if I come across him I would confront him, call him!' Thus, Ibn Az-Za`bari said to Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him 'Did you say this?' Prophet Muhammad replied, 'Yes.' He said, 'By the Lord of the Ka`ba, I defy you. Do the Jews not worship `Uzair (Ezra), the Christians worship `Isa (Jesus) and Banu Malih worship the angels?' At this point, there are two different narrations, one of which said that Messenger of Muhammad kept silent and did not answer, so the people laughed. In the other narration, it is said that he replied saying, 'Rather they worship the devils who told them to do that.'*

(2) *It is related by Al-Hakim in Al-Mustadrak (4612), At-Tabarani in Al-Mu`jam Al-Kabir (10989), and At-Tabari in Tahdhib Al-Athar (1415). Al-Hakim said that the Hadith had an authentic chain of narrators, but was not related by Al-Bukhari or Muslim. The rest of the Hadith is '...so whoever desires the city let him come through the gate.' In another narration, it is said, '...so whoever desires knowledge then let him approach it by its gate.'*

was puzzled concerning a certain matter which was settled by `Ali. When the issue of the woman who bore a child after only six months of pregnancy was brought to `Umar, he judged that the *had* (ordained punishment for violating Allah's Law) should be enforced, because it is well known that the term of pregnancy is nine months. However, `Ali said, 'O Commander of the Believers, there is no sin on her as Allah says: '...and his gestation and weaning [period] is thirty months...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 15) and: 'Mothers may breastfeed their children two complete years for whoever wishes to complete the nursing [period]...' (*al-Baqara*: 233). It is possible that the period of pregnancy could be six months.'⁽¹⁾

Another time he visited `Umar and found he had a whip with him with which he was planning to beat Hudhayfa. Therefore, he said to him, 'Why do I see you angry, O Commander of the Believers? He said, 'I asked Hudhayfa how he was this morning and he said, 'I find myself loving trial, hating the truth, praying without ablution and I have here on earth what Allah does not have above Heaven!' Thus, `Ali replied, 'By Allah, he told the truth, O Commander of the Believers.' `Umar said, 'Would you also say the same, Abu Al-Hasan?' He replied, 'as for trial, Allah says, 'Your wealth and your children are but a trial...' (*al-Anfal*: 28), the truth that he hates is death. He sends blessings and prayers upon Prophet Muhammad without ablution, and he has here on earth a wife and child, but Allah has neither a wife nor a child.' Then, `Umar said, 'It is evil to be in a place where Abu Al-Hasan is not present.'⁽²⁾

Among the subtleties related about `Ali *Allah be pleased with him* is that once he was passing by a group who were differing over which of Allah's created beings is the most powerful, so they asked him, 'Which of the forces of Allah is the strongest, Abu Al-Hasan?' It seems that he had some prior knowledge of the issue and that he would be asked this question, so he indicated the number ten before counting, and said, 'The towering mountains,

(1) *Ibn Kathir said in his Tafsir (4/157), 'The shortest period of pregnancy is six months and the inference of this ruling is correct and was accepted by `Uthman and others.'*

(2) *It is related by Ismail Haqqi in his exegesis. He said, 'It was narrated that a man came to `Umar and said, 'Truly I love trial, hate the truth, bear witness to what I have not seen.' Consequently, `Umar ordered to arrest him. The matter reached `Ali, who asked about the reason for arresting him. `Umar ibn Al-Khattab replied, 'Had it not been for `Ali, `Umar would have been destroyed.'*

but iron can cut the mountains, and fire can melt iron, yet water can put out fire. Nevertheless, the clouds can carry water and the wind drives the clouds, but the son of Adam can beat the wind, wearing heavy clothes and going about his business. Still, the son of Adam sometimes drinks intoxicants, which can be overcome by sleep, and anxiety can vanquish sleep. Thus, the most powerful of Allah's forces is anxiety.'

On many occasions, some of our brothers asked us to narrate to them the speech that `Ali gave when Fatima, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad, passed away. Whenever I finished the story, they would ask me to repeat it again.

When Fatimah passed away, she was buried next to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the Companions. After the burial was over, some people said to `Ali, 'O `Ali, if we permit all of Messenger Muhammad's children to be buried next to him, the mosque will be too crowded for people.' He replied, 'Leave her in this place this day and I will move her at night so as to avoid trouble.' When night came, he moved her.

Among the things that `Ali said while he was burying Fatima by her father's side was, 'Peace be upon you, O Messenger of Allah, from me and your daughter who now comes down by your side, so quick to join you. How little is my patience for the loss of your beloved, and my strength is weakened; however, I find some relief in consoling myself over this affliction. I lay you down in the niche of your grave, O Messenger of Allah, and my heart was overwhelmed. My nights are sleepless and my sorrow is endless, until Allah should choose to take me to the residence wherein you abide. Your daughter will inform you as to the state of your nation, so question her and seek news of the situation, even though your passing away was recent and your remembrance has not been abandoned.'

When he decided to depart, he said, 'Peace be upon you both, peace from the one who bids farewell, not out of weariness nor for rest, as if I turn away it is not out of boredom; if I stay standing here, it is not out of thinking bad of what Allah has promised the patient among His slaves.

The word *yasudun*, which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, means that they raise their voices in laughter and mockery at Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

وَقَالُوا ءَالِهَتُنَا خَيْرٌ أَمْ هُوَ مَا ضَرَبُوهُ لَكَ إِلَّا جَدَلًا بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ خَصِمُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

**Saying, ‘Are our gods better or him?’– they cite him
only to challenge you: they are a contentious people [58]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 58)**

The purpose of their talk about `Isa (Jesus), `Uzair (Ezra) and the angels, and their questions about whether they would go to hell with their worshippers, was nothing but dispraised argumentation. This is because they sought to justify their falsehood, and so this type of argumentation is forbidden. As for desirable argumentation, as prescribed by the Lawgiver, it is constructive argument that leads to the truth. Thus, Allah says about them, ‘...they are a contentious people.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 58) The word *khasim* refers to extreme antagonism and false argumentation, quarrel and obstinacy. We say, ‘*khasamany fulan fakhasamtuh*’ meaning ‘So-and-so was antagonistic towards me, so I sought to overcome him’.

إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا عَبْدٌ أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ مَثَلًا لِّبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ﴿٥٩﴾

**But he is only a servant We favoured and made
an example for the Children of Israel [59]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 59)**

‘But he is only...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 59) refers to `Isa (Jesus) as a slave of Allah just like the rest of the created beings and not a god as they claimed. ‘...We bestowed favour, and We made him an example for the Children of Israel.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 59)

The word *mathala* means an example or an amazing wonder that will remain until the end of time. Was it not amazing that `Isa (Jesus) spoke while still in the cradle? For when his mother was asked about him, she did not want to speak because she knew her speech would not repel the people’s accusations, so she pointed towards him and then they were surprised, ‘...How can we speak to one who is in the cradle a child?’ (*Maryam*: 29) Then, `Isa (Jesus) spoke when he was still a baby, ‘...indeed, I am the servant of Allah...’ (*Maryam*: 30). Thus, his very first words were to affirm that he is a slave of Allah, a matter that some Christians hide because it contradicts their beliefs

about `Isa (Jesus). It is also strange that he said after that: ‘...He gave me the Scripture and made me a prophet’ (*Maryam*: 30) using the past tense, even though he was still in the cradle. How did he say that even though Allah sent him as a prophet and revealed to him the Book after he grew up, reached the age of legal accountability, and was ready to convey Allah’s Message? Whatever Allah wants will inevitably happen, and Allah informed him of these things while he was still a baby.

The word, ‘...servant...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 59) involves receiving Allah’s Grace so long as one is sincere in his worship of Allah. This level of sincerity is what can raise the righteous slave (*Al-Khidr*) up to the point where even Musa (Moses) follows him to learn from him. Allah says about him: ‘And they found a servant from among Our servants to whom we had given mercy from us and had taught him from Us a [certain] knowledge.’ (*al-Kahf*: 65)

In the chapter of *al-Isra`*, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Exalted is He who took His Servant by night...’ (*al-Isra`*: 1). Thus, slavery entails receiving grace from Allah: and the grace of the Message and what lies beyond it. In this verse slavery also entailed receiving grace from Allah: ‘...We favoured...’ him (*az-Zukhruf*: 59). Why did Allah favour him? Allah favoured him by electing him for conveying His Message, and by creating him in an unparalleled manner in which no one of the created being were created. Thus, Allah says: ‘...And We made the son of Maryam (Mary) and his mother a sign...’ (*al-Mu`minun*: 50). It means a wondrous miracle showing Allah’s Omnipotence.

In the verse under consideration, Allah says: ‘...and made an example for the Children of Israel.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 59) because they are a materialistic people who did not believe in matters of the Unseen. They always sought tangible things which they can experience with their senses. Did they not say to Musa (Moses): ‘...Show us Allah manifestly’ (*an-Nisa`*: 153), although Allah cannot be seen, ‘Vision perceives Him not, but He perceives [all] vision; and He is the Subtle, the Acquainted....’ (*al-An`am*: 103). When Allah sent down manna and quails upon them, which are of the best types of food, they said: ‘O Moses, we can never endure one [kind of] food. So, call upon your Lord to bring forth for us from the earth its green herbs and its

cucumbers and its garlic⁽¹⁾, and its lentils and its onions. [Moses] said, “Would you exchange what is better for what is less?”” (*al-Baqara*: 61)

وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ مَلَائِكَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ يَخْلُقُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

**If it had been Our will, We could have made you
angels, succeeding one another on earth [60]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 60)**

Had Allah willed, He could have replaced the children of Israel with angels to inhabit the earth instead of them. This would only take place with the children of Israel’s destruction and annihilation. This is not difficult for Allah. This verse includes a proof of Allah’s Omnipotence, and that He does what He wills.

وَإِنَّهُ لَعَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ﴿٦١﴾ فَلا تَمْتَرْ بِهَا وَاتَّبِعُونِ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ﴿٦١﴾

**This [Quran] gives knowledge of the Hour: do not
doubt it. Follow Me for this is the right path [61]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 61)**

‘This...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 61), refers to ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*, ‘...is a sign of the Hour...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 61). This means that the re-emergence of ‘Isa (Jesus) indicates the approach of the Hour. ‘...do not doubt it...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 61). This means that people should not doubt it or debate concerning its occurrence, as it is a true fact without doubt. ‘...Follow me...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 61) means ‘accept what I am saying and follow my footsteps, as I am role model for you regarding worship and aspects of life. ‘...for this...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 61), i.e. what I have brought to you ‘...is the right path.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 61)

(1) Regarding the word *fum*, which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, there are three sayings:

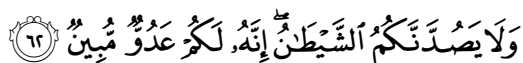
That it is wheat, which is the opinion held by Ibn ‘Abbas and As-Suddi who related it from his sheikhs.

That it is garlic, which is the opinion held by ‘Abdullah and Ubayy, and was chosen by Al-Farra.’

That it is grains, which is the opinion mentioned by Ibn Qutayba and Az-Zajjaj. [from *Zad Al-Masir* by Ibn Al-Jawzy]

Allah *Glorified is He* has set clear signs which indicate the approach of the Hour because it lies in the Unseen and none but Allah can know it. All we know about the Hour are the signs that indicate its coming.

Regarding Prophet `Isa (Jesus), we believe that he is alive in the heavens, and that he will come back down to earth. In the Hadith pertaining to the Prophet's Night Journey, it is mentioned that `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* prayed behind Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Even though he is alive in the heavens, he will return to earth, die and be buried. To those who object to this issue and ask how `Isa (Jesus) is alive in the heavens, we say that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was taken on the Night Journey and ascended the heavens where he stayed for a period of time, be it short or long. Therefore, as for `Isa (Jesus), the only difference is the period of time, as the one who can stay in the heavens for one or two hours can stay there longer.



Do not let Satan hinder you, for he is your sworn enemy [62] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 62)

It means that people should not let Satan prevent them from the Truth and guidance because: 'he is your sworn enemy.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 62) This indicates that his enmity is plain, old and unwavering since the time of Adam *peace be upon him*. Thus, they should not give him any opportunity to prevent them from the Truth or to handle dubious affairs because he seeks disagreement and tries to cause them to fall into misguidance. Allah states what Satan says: '...I will surely sit in wait for them on Your straight path.' (*al-A'raf*: 16) He seeks to spoil their acts of worship.

Allah has instructed us to defend ourselves against him: 'And if an evil suggestion comes to you from Satan, then seek refuge in Allah. Indeed, He is Hearing and Knowing.' (*al-A'raf*: 200) Allah's Name will repel Satan's whispers and insinuations because Satan's insinuations cannot stand mentioning Allah's Name.

As we said previously, if a thief was prowling around your house and heard you speak, he would retreat and leave the place even if you were unaware of his presence when you spoke. Accordingly, when you feel Satan's

insinuations encroaching upon you, you have only to remember Allah and seek refuge with Him from Satan's insinuations. You should say, 'I seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Satan' out loud. Satan has admitted that he has no power over those who believe in Allah and are sincere to Him: '[Satan] said, "By Your Might, I will surely mislead them all, except, among them, Your chosen servants. (*Sad*: 82-83)

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ عِيسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالَ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَلِأُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ
بَعْضَ الَّذِي تَخْتَلِفُونَ فِيهِ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا

**When Jesus came with clear signs he said, 'I have brought
you wisdom; I have come to clear up some of your
differences for you. Be mindful of God and obey me [63]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 63)**

The word *al-bayyinat* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse refers to signs and miracles. '...he said, "I have brought you wisdom..." (*az-Zukhruf*: 63). 'Wisdom' here refers to the Gospel and its rulings. '...I have come to clear up some of your differences for you...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 63). 'Differences' refers to that which they differed about before the coming of 'Isa (Jesus) and after his transfer. They said about him that he is, 'the Son of Allah' and 'the third of three', and the Jews had more than this to say.

Allah says that He gave 'Isa (Jesus) wisdom which refers to the Gospel. The word 'wisdom' means putting everything in its correct place. 'Isa (Jesus) came after Judaism which was given completely to materialism, as I formed the starting point for everything. We mentioned previously that materialism led them to ask their messenger to see Allah, '...they said, "Show us Allah manifestly"...' (*an-Nisa*: 153). Accordingly, they have no room for matters of the unseen in their lives. Even regarding their food and drink, when Allah sent down the manna and quails upon them, they were not content with them, as they wanted food that they could prepare. Thus, Allah said to them: '...Enter a city⁽¹⁾ so you will have what you ask for...' (*al-Baqara*: 61).

(1) Regarding '...Enter a city so you will have what you ask for...' (*al-Baqara*: 61), with nunnation on the word *Misr*, there are two sayings: =

In addition, we do not find the Last Day mentioned either in the Torah or in the Talmud, even though belief in the Last Day is a pillar of true faith. However, they do not believe in it because of their materialism. Thus, the Message that 'Isa (Jesus) brought was overwhelmingly spiritual to compensate for the lack of spirituality in Judaism and to reset the balance in creation. In addition, we do not find social regulations in the Gospels. If they needed something like this, they had to take it from the Torah, despite the adversity that existed between the Christians and the Jews. Then, the matter ended up by combining the Torah with the Gospel into one book. Once 'Isa (Jesus) was asked about inheritance and he replied, 'I was not sent to leave an inheritance.'

When materialism prevailed, Allah repelled it with spirituality restoring the balance in life, as spirituality keeps materialism moving on. Thus, 'Isa (Jesus) was sent with a Message to nurture religious emotions and raise the level of spirituality.

Life needs both materialism and spirituality; material undertakings deal with nature and the universe. There are things in the universe which give out without necessity to interact with them, such as the sun, the moon, the stars, water, and air. One merely receives their benefits. There are other things that will give you nothing unless you interact with them; the earth, for example, must be ploughed, sowed, and cultivated in order for it to give you crops.

As the Jews went to extremes in materialism, the Christians went to extremes in spirituality. Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* said, when he saw some people stoning a woman,⁽¹⁾ 'Let he who is without sin stone her'. He also said ⁽²⁾, 'If someone slaps you on the right cheek offer him your left cheek'. This is from the monasticism that Allah did not enjoin on them;

= It is the name of an unknown city. This opinion was held by Ibn Mas'ud and Ibn 'Abbas, as they viewed that the children of Israel were ordered to go to a city because what they asked for was found in a city.

It is the country named *Misr* (Egypt). This opinion was held by Abu Al-'Aliyah and Ad-Dahhak. [Ibn Al-Jawzi, *Zad Al-Masir*]

- (1) This is mentioned in the Gospel of John [7: 8]. The full text is, 'Let he who is without sin throw the first stone.'
- (2) This is mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew, 55: 39. The full text is, 'Do not repel evil with evil, rather if someone slaps you on the right cheek, then offer him the other.'

rather, they themselves undertook it voluntarily as a means to get closer to Allah. The problem with this was that they did not give it its due. Allah says: 'Then We sent following their footsteps Our messengers and followed [them] with 'Isa (Jesus), the son of Maryam (Mary), and gave him the Gospel. And We placed in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and mercy and monasticism, which they innovated; We did not prescribe it for them except [that they did so] seeking the approval of Allah. But they did not observe it with due observance. So, We gave the ones who believed among them their reward, but many of them are defiantly disobedient.' (*al-Hadid*: 27) Thus, the reason for objection here is not their monasticism itself, but the fact that they did not give it its due observance. While Judaism went to extremes in materialism, Christianity was purely spirituality, with no rules for organizing the society. There was a necessity to reconcile the two extremes, and society needed renewal of religion and a new Message to bring the spiritual and material sides together, which is the message of Islam.

Reflect on the way the Quran presents an example for Prophet Muhammad and his nation once in the Torah and in the Gospel: 'Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] pleasure. Their mark is on their faces from the trace of prostration. That is their description in the Torah. And their description in the Gospel is as a plant which produces its offshoots and strengthens them so they grow firm and stand upon their stalks, delighting the sowers - so that Allah may enrage by them the disbelievers...' (*al-Fath*: 29).

This is how the Islamic *Ummah* joined between material and spirit. The Muslim is not excessively severe or merciful, rather, his disposition changes according to the circumstances. With whom is he severe and whom does he treat mercifully?

Reflect upon the precision of the Quranic expression when it gives an example of the Islamic nation in the Torah and the Gospel. It presents the spiritual side of Islam to the Jews, as they are materialistic people. '...You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] pleasure. Their mark is on their faces from the trace of prostration...' (*al-Fath*: 29).

The Quran portrays the materialistic side of Islam in the Gospel: ‘...as a plant which produces its offshoots and strengthens them so they grow firm and stand upon their stalks, delighting the sowers - so that Allah may enrage by them the disbelievers...’ (*al-Fath*: 29).

Thus, as Islam combines materialism with spirituality, it becomes the religion fit for leading life. Spirituality without materialism is unsustainable, as the worshipper cannot persevere in worshipping without having something to eat and wear. How will he get, for example, a loaf of bread? How can he get a garment to wear? The bread can be obtained when a farmer sows the seeds of wheat and harvests it, then the miller grinds them then the flour is baked in the bakery. Thus, a loaf of bread is produced with the help of many workers. The garment also needs work and material movement.

Thus, Allah has made the Quran a guardian over the previous books: ‘...a guardian over it...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 48). Allah also says: ‘It is truly exalted in the Source of Scripture kept with Us and full of wisdom.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 4) This means that it is elevated above all the other Heavenly Books.

Allah’s saying: ‘...I have come to clear up some of your differences for you...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 63), refers to certain things that were forbidden to the Jews, but which Allah made permissible for them, such as camels. Allah says, ‘...to make lawful for you some of what was forbidden to you...’ (*Al-Imran*: 50). Allah also says, ‘And to those who are Jews We prohibited every animal of uncloven hoof; and of the cattle and the sheep We prohibited to them their fat, except what adheres to their backs or the entrails or what is joined with bone...’ (*al-An’am*: 146).

إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَأَعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ﴿٦٤﴾

God is my Lord and your Lord. Serve Him: this is the straight path [64] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 64)

Notice in this verse the use of the pronoun *huwa* (He) which emphasises that Allah alone is my Lord and yours. ‘...So worship Him...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 64) because what he was calling them to is the Truth. ‘...this is the straight path.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 64) with no crookedness therein.

We said previously that the straight path is the direct path that will lead you to your destination via the shortest distance with the least amount of trouble. The path to Allah takes you from religious duties enjoined by Allah to Allah's reward, as the final return is to Him alone.

فَاخْتَلَفَ الْأَحْزَابُ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمْ فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ
ظَلَمُوا مِنْ عَذَابٍ يَوْمَ إِلِيمٍ

**Yet still the different factions among them
disagreed – woe to the evildoers: they will
suffer the torment of a grievous day! [65]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 65)**

The word *al-ahzab* (factions) which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse is the plural of *hizb* which refers to a group of people who share a common thought or belief. That these factions differed with each other is an indication that they were in error and were of satanic inspiration, as Allah's faction has one creed which derived from the Book of Allah. '...those are the party of Allah. Unquestionably, the party of Allah - they are the successful.' (*al-Mujadala*: 22)

'...woe to the evildoers: they will suffer the torment of a grievous day.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 65) The word *wayl* (woe) refers to ruin, inflicted on them by Allah. We said that an action is measured by the strength of its doer, so what about punishment inflicted by Allah?

Scholars say that *wayl* is the name of a valley in hell for: '...the evildoers...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 65). This means that they oppressed themselves by following their vain desires and indulging in acts of disobedience. Perhaps they oppressed other people as well.

'...they will suffer the torment of a grievous day.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 65) If the Day on which the torment will happen is a grievous day, then what about the torment itself? The punishment is permanent, endless, massive, and grievous. This torment is also described as humiliating for the one whom Allah wants to humiliate and disgrace. Thus, every sinner has a type of torments that suits him.

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا السَّاعَةَ أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

What are they waiting for but the Hour, which will come upon them suddenly and take them unawares? [66]

(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 66)

They are only waiting for the Hour, i.e. the Day of Judgement ‘...which will come upon them suddenly and take them unawares’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 66). If one knows that it will come suddenly, he must prepare himself for it ‘...None will reveal its time except Him...’ (*al-A'raf*: 187). We have already said that the obscurity of the time of the Day of Judgement and death entails elucidation and clarity. As their time is unknown, this gives a strong warning so that one must be prepared and waiting for it at any time. In addition, the obscurity of the cause or place of death serves the same objective. ‘...no one knows in which land he shall die...’ (*Luqman*: 34). If there is no other cause of death, then death itself is the cause.

الْأَخِلَاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ إِلَّا الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

On that Day, friends will become each other's enemies.

Not so the righteous [67] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 67)

This is a reference to the Day of Judgement when the criterion of brotherhood and friendship will be turned upside down. The word *akhilla'* is the plural of *khalil* which refers to the friend whom you love so much to the extent that you have become one with his flesh and blood, as the poet⁽¹⁾ said:

And when we met yearning almost reached its limit,
Two friends melting together in ardour and reproof,
As though a friend melted and mixed with his friend,
During the embrace and disappeared⁽²⁾

(1) He was Ismail Sabri Basha, one of the best poets of the modern era. He was distinguished by his beautiful poems and elegant style. He was born in 1854 CE and studied law in France. He used to write his poetry in the margins of books and magazines. He passed away in Cairo in 1923 CE at the age of 69. [*Al-Mawsu'a Ash-Shi'riyya*]

(2) These two lines of poetry were written by Ismail Sabri from a poem in the *Tawil* metre. In *Al-Mawsu'a Ash-Shi'riyya*, there is a slight difference in the wording used; it contains,=

Friendship can be either in goodness or in evil. Friendship in goodness is that which helps you follow Allah's path, and the true friend is the one who helps you if you follow the upright path and advises you if you do not follow the upright path. Allah describes the believers as follows: 'Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience.' (*al-'Asr*: 3) The true friends who do what is mentioned in this verse are referred to in Prophet Muhammad's saying, 'Seven are (the persons) whom Allah will give shade of His Throne on the Day when there would be no shade other than His Throne's shade: Amongst them are two persons who love and meet each other and depart from each other for the sake of Allah.'⁽¹⁾ This is true and sincere friendship, which continues from the worldly life world to the Day of Judgement.

As for those who accompany each other in doing evil acts and breaching what Allah has made inviolable, their companionship in the Hereafter will turn to enmity and hatred, as each one will blame the other. The evil they used to do in the worldly life will destroy them in the Hereafter, and the acts of disobedience that combined them in the worldly life will cast them into everlasting torment. Each one will see the other as an enemy because he did not warn him or prevent him from evil. Therefore, Islam attaches importance to choosing good companions and friends and has taught us how to choose righteous companions.

The Hour of Recompense will disclose the spurious relationships; nothing will remain but the bonds of goodness which bind one a person to his fellow. The Gracious Quran has described in more than one verse what will happen between this type of friends in the worldly life who will turn into enemies in the Hereafter. Among these verses is Allah's saying, '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)

= 'two sad ones overflowed' instead of 'Two friends melting together', and 'As though a melted and mixed with his beloved' instead of 'As though a friend melted and mixed with his friend.

(1) It is related by Muslim in his *Sahih* (1031) on the authority of Abu Hurayra. The first of the seven is a just leader. It is also related by Malik in his *Muwatta'* (1501) and *Al-Bukhari* in his *Sahih* (620, 1334, 6308).

Allah says:

يَعْبَادِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ تَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾

‘My servants, there is no fear for you today, nor shall you grieve’[68] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 68)

The plural of the word *`abd* (slave/servant) can be either *`abid* or *`ibad*, and each of them has its own meaning; the word *`abid* includes all types of people: the believer, the disbeliever, the obedient and the disobedient. They are all *`abeed* (slaves) because they are all subject to Allah in matters which they cannot escape, such as sickness, death, etc. Thus, people are all slaves in this sense.

However, the word *`ibad* refers to the elect who have worshipped Allah willingly sincerely, and have abandoned their desires for of the sake of doing what pleases their Lord, so they deserve this status. In Allah’s saying: ‘...My servants...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 68), He has attributed His slaves to Himself. The word *`ibad* does not come with a meaning other than the above except in one verse about the Day of Judgement where Allah says, ‘...did you mislead My servants...’ (*al-Furqan*: 17)? Allah has named them *`ibad* (servants) even though they are astray. The scholars said that this is because the subject in this verse is the Day of Judgement when no one has a choice whether to believe or disbelieve, and all people are obedient.

Allah honours us by addressing us with: ‘...My servants...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 68) because He ascribes us to Himself; as a poet⁽¹⁾ said:

Of the things that raised me in honour and dignity,
And caused me to almost set foot upon the stars,
My inclusion in Your saying, ‘O My slaves’,
And that you made Ahmad a Prophet for me.⁽²⁾

(1) He is Muhammad Al-Hilali Al-Hamawi, one of the poets of the modern era, and the author of *Al-Manzumat Al-Hilaliyya*. He was born in 1820 CE and passed away in 1894 CE at the age of 75. He wrote 308 poems with a total of 6059 lines of poetry [*Al-Mawsu’a Ash-Shi’riyya*].

(2) These two lines of poetry are from a poem in the *Wafir* metre which has six lines [*Al-Mawsu’a Ash-Shi’riyya*].

Allah says, ‘...there is no fear for you today, nor shall you grieve.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 68) How could there be any fear when we are Allah’s slaves? How could fear afflict us when we cling to Allah? The believers say that no anguish will afflict them because Allah manages all affairs. His saying: ‘...there is no fear for you today, nor shall you grieve’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 68) means that they shall not grieve over the bounties they did not receive in the worldly life because will obtain better bounties that will last more than the bounties of the worldly life.

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾

Those who believed in Our revelations and devoted themselves to Us [69] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 69)

This verse shows us the difference between *iman* (faith) and *Islam* (devotion), the former is relevant to the heart whereas the later refers to putting Allah’s religious instructions and commands into practice. Thus, we see that the hypocrites may be the first people to come to perform prayer even though faith does not settle in their hearts. Allah says, ‘The Bedouins say, “We have believed.” Say, “You have not [yet] believed; but say [instead], “We have submitted...”’ (*al-Hujurat*: 14). They used to pray in the front row to repel any accusations of hypocrisy.

It is amazing that hypocrisy manifested itself in Medina although it is the city of the *Ansar* (Helpers from Medina) and the place from which Islam spread, and did not manifest in Mecca, the stronghold of disbelief and idols and the city with the fiercest enmity towards Islam. After reflecting upon this phenomenon, we say that hypocrisy does not manifest itself except in front of a power that causes fear. In Medina, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* became a power to be feared and had supporters and an army. When he was in Mecca, he was in a position of weakness and was suffering persecution, so why would anyone dissemble to him?

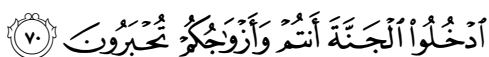
Allah’s saying: ‘...those who believed in Our revelations...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 69) means that their hearts were convinced with them. There are different degrees for conviction: ‘*ilm al-yaqin*’ (certainty of knowledge) when someone whom you trust informs you of something, ‘*ayn al-yaqin*’ (certainty of the eye)

when you see something which causes you to be certain and '*haq al-yaqin*' (true certainty) when you experience something with your own senses.

I remember when once I went to Indonesia, I saw bananas, one of which is half a metre long. I was astonished and decided to take some back with me to Egypt to show to my children. When I went back, I told them about these things I had seen in Indonesia. Actually, they too were surprised, as they know that I do not lie to them. This is an example of the certainty of knowledge. Then, I told them to open a certain bag. They opened it and found therein bananas just as I had described. This is the certainty of the eye. Finally, when they got them out, touched, and tasted them, they reached true certainty.

Does the one who believes with the certainty of knowledge carry out the instructions of his faith? The one who carries out these instructions is a true believer while the one who does not is a hypocrite because he does not act according to the instructions of his faith.

When the Bedouins heard this verse, they were filled with hope that they would attain faith in the future because they knew the meaning of the particle *lamma* (not yet), it negates the past and the present but not the future. Allah's saying: 'The Bedouins say, "We have believed." Say, "You have not [yet] believed; but say [instead], "We have submitted," for faith has not yet entered your hearts' (*al-Hujurat*: 14) means that faith will enter their hearts in the future.



‘Enter Paradise, you and your spouses: you will be filled with joy’ [70] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 70)

This is the reward of those who believed in and submitted to Allah. Allah will say to them on the Day of Judgement: 'Enter Paradise, you and your spouses: you will be filled with joy!' (*az-Zukhruf*: 70) Spouses are mentioned in this verse because with every pleasure a man gains, he becomes overwhelmed by the passions that accompany puberty, so he inclines towards gaining a spouse with whom he can share his joys and delights, and the same applies to women. The spouse then, be it a husband or a wife, is the first companion that is desired, and then the source of tranquillity, love and mercy. Tranquillity

and love are well known between couples, but what about mercy? Mercy manifests between the spouses as they reach old age, when each of them is in need of compassion and kindness before all other feelings.

Allah says: ‘...you will be filled with joy.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 70) The word ‘*al-hubur*’ refers to extreme happiness that overcomes someone when they experience such joy that nothing can spoil, as mentioned in Allah’s saying: ‘You will recognize in their faces the radiance of pleasure.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 24)

يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِصِحَافٍ مِّنْ ذَهَبٍ وَأَكْوَابٍ وَفِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهُيه
الْأَنفُسُ وَلِتَلَذُّ الْأَعْيُنُ وَأَنتُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

**Dishes and goblets of gold will be passed around them with
all that their souls desire and their eyes delight in. ‘There
you will remain [71] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 71)**

The verse tackles the delights of paradise. The word *sihaf* is the plural of *safeeha* which means a large plate that a whole family can use while eating. The bigger plate is called *qas`a*, and *jafna`* is bigger than *qas`a*. In this regard, it is narrated on the authority of Ibn Jad`an⁽¹⁾ that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had a large *jafna* (large dish) under which he shaded himself from the heat of the sun.⁽²⁾

It is also mentioned in the story of our Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and the jinn that Allah placed in his service Allah says: ‘They made for him what he willed of elevated chambers, statues, bowls like reservoirs, and stationary kettles....’ (*Saba`*: 13). In paradise, the dishes are made of gold.

(1) ‘Abdullah ibn Jad`an At-Tamimi Al-Qurashi, who was famous for his generosity in the pre-Islamic period, met Prophet Muhammad before his mission as a prophet. There are many narrations about him, some of which were related by Al-Asfahani and others. Al-Ya`qubi named him as one of the Arab leaders in the pre-Islamic period. [Az-Zirikli, Al-A`lam 4/76]

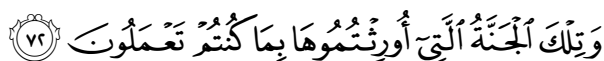
(2) Ismail Haqqi states in his exegesis, ‘‘Abdullah ibn Jad`an, one of the leaders of Quraysh and `Aisha’s cousin, had a *jafna* (large dish) under which he would seek shade. It was so big that a man riding a camel could take from it, and one time a child fell in it and drowned. He used to feed the poor every day from that dish.’

In '...and goblets of gold...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 71), the word *akwab* (goblets) is the plural of *kub* which refers to a drinking vessel that has no handle, However, the word *`abariq* is the plural of *`ibriq* which is a drinking vessel that is open at the top and has a handle, and the word *ka's* refers to a *kub* (goblet) that it is full of a drink. There they have '...all that their soul's desire and their eyes delight in...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 71). This is a concise description for many things whose details would take a great deal of time to describe. What is served on these plates and in these cups is whatever the heart desires of food and drink, as far as taste is concerned.

In '...and their eyes delight in...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 71), the colour of these foods and drinks delight the eye; merely looking at them is an enjoyable experience, so what about their taste? When you host a guest who is dear to you, you ask him what he would like to eat in order to offer him what he wants and to fulfil his desire, not just to fill his belly. Notice also that Allah mentions dishes first then goblets because people usually eat first and then drinks. Thus, the verse includes order according to priority.

Allah mentions the pleasure of looking at food because one can find a pleasure in looking at food that sometimes surpasses that of eating. Thus, Allah says in another verse: '...Look at [each of] its fruit when it yields and [at] it is ripening...' (*al-An'am*: 99) combining the pleasure of the food and that of looking at it.

Allah says: '...There you will remain' (*az-Zukhruf*: 71) because it is an eternal dwelling with no death, and the blessings will never cease. This means that these blessings will never be disrupted, as Allah says, 'either limited [to season] or forbidden.' (*al-Waqi'a*: 33) This is a gift from Allah, so it will never cease.



**This is the Garden you are given as your own,
because of what you used to do [72]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 72)**

His saying: '...which you have inherited...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 72) means that you have received it as an inheritance. Inheritance is only given after the

death of its owner. For example, a person dies leaving his possessions and his legacy for his children and family. These people receive the departed person's possessions without holding a contract or paying a price, but from whom have they inherited?

Allah says in another verse: 'Those are the inheritors. Who will inherit *al-firdaus*. They will abide therein eternally.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 10-11) Scholars said that when Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* created everything, He knew the number of all things, and wrote all things in that ancient time. It is authentically related that the Pen dried after that.⁽¹⁾

When Al-Ma'mun was asked, 'What does your Lord do when it is authentically related that the Pen has dried?' He said, 'There are affairs that He manifests and others He does not reveal, He elevates some peoples, and He lowers others.'⁽²⁾

Scholars also said, with regard to the aforementioned inheritance, that the believers will inherit disbelievers and will take their places in paradise. This is because Allah has reserved for each person a place in paradise and a place in the fire, so that even if all people were obedient believers, there would be sufficient space for them in paradise. If they all disbelieved, there would be enough places for them in Hell.

Thus, when the people of the hell will enter it, their places in paradise will be inherited by the believers, as Allah gives them these places out of His Generosity and Bounty. He will also admit them into paradise as a reward for their faith and good deeds in the worldly life.

(1) *At-Tirmidhi relates in his Sunnan [3566] on the authority of `Abdullah ibn `Amr ibn Al-`As who said that Messenger Muhammad said, 'Indeed Allah created His creation in darkness, then He cast His Light upon them, so whoever is touched by that light he is guided, and whoever is not, he goes astray. It is for this reason that I say that the pens have dried with Allah's Knowledge' At-Tirmidhi said that the Hadith is Hasan (good) and Ahmad related it in his Musnad (6356, 6559).*

(2) *Ash-Shawkani stated in Al-Fayd Al-Qadir (2/292) that `Abdullah ibn Tahir, the governor of Khorasan, asked Al-Ma'mun Al-Husayn ibn Fadl about Allah's saying: '...every day He is bringing about a matter.' (ar-Rahman: 29) He replied, 'They are affairs that He manifests and others He does not reveal.' Then, he stood up and kissed his head. Az-Zamakhshari also mentioned this in Al-Kashshaf and Al-Fawakih Ad-Dawani `Ala Risalit ibn Abu Zaid Al-Qayrawani. [1/156]*

Allah says, '...which you inherited because of what you used to do.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 72) Thus, good deeds are the main factor for entering paradise and inheriting the places that were reserved for the people will be admitted into.

We notice in the question of inheritance that possession of the inherited object is transferred from the one inheriting to the inheritor, and becomes lawful to him regardless of its source, whether lawful or unlawful. If a person earns money from unlawful means, he will bear alone its burden and sin on the Day of Judgement. When this wealth is transferred to the inheritor, it becomes lawful for him and there is no sin on him because the responsibility is not transferred. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* settled this issue when he said, 'The worst of you is he who dies with evil and yet leaves his family with plenty of wealth.'⁽¹⁾

Thus, the inheritor should not inquire about the source of this wealth he has inherited. He is like the wife who need not ask her husband about the source of the money he spends on her. Similarly, the prepubescent child need not ask about the source of the money spent on him. When this child reaches puberty, and becomes able to earn his living, he is entitled to ask this question because he is able to earn a lawful living himself.

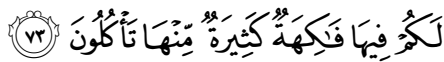
This is based on an analogy with the verse: 'and when the children among you reach puberty, let them ask permission [at all times] as those before them have done....' (*an-Nur*: 59) After the son reaches puberty, he is no longer entitled to receive expenditure from his father; yet if his father does, this will be out of his generosity.

The father's kindness in our society has had a negative effect upon our economy; the fathers' excessive affection towards their children has prolonged their period of childhood and extended it to the age of twenty-five or even thirty. All this time the child is dependent upon his father and expects his father to bring him a flat, furniture and all the necessities of marriage. Our

(1) *It is related by Al-Qada'i in his Musnad (Ash-Shihab) [2/24] (304) from the Hadith narrated by Ibn 'Umar with the following wording: 'Woe to he who leaves his family with plenty but goes on to his Lord with evil.' Al-'Ajaluni attributed it to Kashf Al-Khafa' by Ad-Daylami [H 2977]. Al-Albany said that it is a fabricated Hadith in Silsilat Al-Ahadith Ad-Da'ifa Wal-Mawu'a (4/157).*

youths have inclined towards relaxation and left the responsibilities to their fathers. This has led to the waste of much energy.

Thus, the West has overcome us in this field. At this age, their youths get engaged in life and work. Each one carries his own responsibility and becomes completely independent of his family. It is true that they have made mistakes in this field as have dealt with girls and boys on equal footings. Girls differ in this regard, as fathers take care of their daughters until they get married. Girls should only leave their fathers' houses to her husbands' houses.



**And there is abundant fruit in it for
you to eat [73] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 73)**

Allah has mentioned the food and drink in paradise and that they are served on dishes and goblets which were well known to the Arabs. In this verse, Allah mentions that among the blessings of paradise are fruits with which the Arabs were not very familiar with and knew but few types. Therefore, fruits have been mentioned after the food and drink. Eating fruit after food and drink is evidence of indulgence and luxury. The word '*al-fakiha* (fruit) is derived from the word '*at-tafakkuh* (amusement), so it is not a necessity but rather a luxury.

Allah has provided us with the necessities of life: food, drink, and clothing and has given us things that make our lives easier. For example, Allah says, 'O children of Adam, We have bestowed upon you clothing to conceal your private parts and as adornment. But the clothing of righteousness - that is best...' (*al-A'raf*: 26). The clothes that cover people's private parts are a necessity but the adornment is for luxury. Allah draws our attention to that which is more important than material clothing: the spiritual clothing that protects one in the worldly life and the Hereafter, which is the clothing of righteousness.

Having given us a concise image of the people of paradise and the blessings it contains, Allah *Glorified is He* will show us its opposite so that the image becomes clearer, and this is one of the characteristics of the Quranic style. This is because when mentioning things that rejoice the soul, and then things that cause the soul to become gloomy, the difference between the two

becomes clear. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Indeed, the righteous will be in pleasure. And indeed, the wicked will be in Hellfire.' (*al-Infitar*: 13-14) In the chapter under discussion, Allah says:

إِنَّ الْمُجْرِمِينَ فِي عَذَابٍ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾
لَا يُفْتَرُ عَنْهُمْ وَهُمْ فِيهِ مُبْلِسُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

**But the evildoers will remain in Hell's punishment [74]
from which there is no relief: they will remain in utter
despair [75] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 74-75)**

Allah lays down three facts regarding the disbelievers: That they will stay in hell's punishment eternally: 'from which there is no relief...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 75) means that punishment will never be mitigated. '...they will remain in utter despair.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 75)

They will be sorrowful, without hope of salvation, despairing of any goodness and with no hope of getting out of hell. Thus, they will be encompassed by every type of pain, sorrow, despair, and hopelessness.

وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا هُمُ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٧٦﴾

**We never wronged them; they were the ones who
did wrong [76] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 76)**

The punishment they received is the recompense for their actions, not some form of oppression, as Allah has shown and clarified for them the paths of good and evil. 'And have shown him the two paths?' (*al-Balad*: 10) Allah also said, 'and inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness.' (*ash-Shams*: 8) However, they oppressed themselves when they rushed to satisfy their vain and unlawful desires. Thus, Allah deprived them from the eternal and lawful pleasures of the afterlife. The worst oppression is the oppression of oneself, as it entails transgression and stupidity.

وَنَادُوا بِمَلِكٍ لِّيَقْضِيَ عَلَيْنَا رَبُّكَ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ مَرْكُوتٌ
لَقَدْ جِئْنَاكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَكُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كَذِبُونَ

**They will cry, ‘Malik, if only your Lord would finish us off’
but he will answer, ‘No! You are here to stay [77] We have
brought you the Truth but most of you despise it [78]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 77-78)**

In these verses, Allah speaks about the people of hell (we seek refuge with Allah), as they call upon Malik, the keeper of Hell, ‘...Malik, if only your Lord would finish us off...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 77). This means that they want to die so that they can rest from this endless punishment. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...Every time their skins are roasted through We will replace them with other skins so they may taste the punishment...’ (*an-Nisa*: 56). Modern science has established that the skin is responsible for sensing. The proof is that if one is given an injection, pain is only experienced when the needle is penetrating the skin. The Quran has preceded all these sciences in clarifying this fact. Thus, the people of hell seek death so that they may be saved from this punishment.

We notice that the verb *liyaqdi*, which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, is in the form of an imperative, as it is preceded by ‘*lam al-amr*’ (a letter indicating imperative case). Can Allah be ordered about, especially by the people of Hell? We say that if a request that comes from one of a higher rank to one of a lower, it is called an order; if it comes from one of the same rank then it is a request; if it comes from the lower to the higher it is a supplication. Thus, we do not order Allah; rather, we supplicate Him.

He will reply ‘Indeed, you will remain,’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 77) persisting in the fire, living eternally therein, for you have no excuse. ‘We had certainly brought you the truth,’ i.e., the true religion and the true way; ‘but most of you despise it. (*az-Zukhruf*: 78) And this is the meaning of, ‘And We did not wrong them, but it was they who were the wrongdoers.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 76)

After this, the subject of speech is directed towards the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Very often his Lord would address him to console him and lighten his burden, for he endured much obstinacy and

affliction from his people. They hurt his body and soul when they incited the weak-minded among them to stone him until his feet bled.⁽¹⁾ They flung rubbish and camel entrails on his back while he was praying.⁽²⁾ They hurt him spiritually when they called him a sorcerer, a soothsayer, a liar, a poet and a madman. The True Lord *Glorified is He* clarifies for him that he has come after an interlude in the line of messengers *peace be upon them* after the world has been corrupted and evil has spread far and wide. Behind this corruption are people who benefit from it and defend it; and it is only natural that they should oppose you and stand in the way of your mission, for they desire to maintain their positions and benefit from the vice.

The distaste of these people for the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* reached such a level that they planned his demise and an end to his mission. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'and [remember, O Muhammad], when those who disbelieved plotted against you to restrain you or kill you or evict you [from Mecca] But they plan, and Allah plans. And Allah is the best of planners.' (*al-Anfal*: 30)

Here, the True Lord *Glorified is He* addresses His Messenger:⁽³⁾

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- (1) *This was related by Ibn Al-Qayyim in his book Zad Al-Ma'ad [3/28]. He said, 'The Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him went to Ta'if in the hope that they would aid and assist him against his people ... but they incited the weak-minded amongst them such that they stood in two rows, one on either side of him, and threw stones at him until his feet started bleeding.'*
 - (2) *This was related by the author of Subul Al-Huda Wa-Rashad in his book [2/436] and he attributed it to Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Al-Bazzar and At-Tabarani on the authority of Ibn Mas'ud Allah be pleased with him that he said, 'I saw the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him supplicate against Quraysh on more than one occasion. Once he was praying and there was a band of men from Quraysh seated nearby along with the innards of a camel that had been slaughtered the day before. Abu Jahl asked, "Who will take the entrails of this camel and put them on the shoulders of Muhammad when he prostrates?" So they sent the worst of them, 'Uqba ibn Abu Mu'it, and he brought the innards and threw them onto his back, at which they fell over each other laughing. Meanwhile, the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him did not so much as raise his head, but Fatima Allah be pleased with her came along, removed the mess from his back and prayed against whoever had done this.'*
 - (3) *Al-Qurtubi mentions in his Tafsir [9/6166] in something he relates from Muqatil, 'This verse was revealed in response to their conspiracy against the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him in Dar An-Nadwa, when they decided to put into practice what=*

﴿٧٩﴾ أَمْ أَبْرَمُوا أَمْرًا فَإِنَّا مُبْرِمُونَ

Have these disbelievers thought up some scheme? We too have been scheming [79] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 79)

That is to say, they have conspired regarding you O Muhammad, and have formed a plan, but do not be concerned for we await them in ambush; ‘We are devising [a plan]’ We have a plan just as they have a plan, and while we know what they are thinking and none of it is hidden from us, yet they do not know what we have in store for them; so which of the two parties is the stronger?

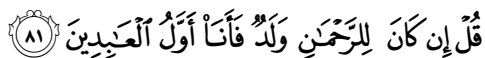
﴿٨٠﴾ أَمْ يَحْسِبُونَ أَنَّا لَا نَسْمَعُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوَاهُمْ بَلَىٰ وَرُسُلْنَا لَدَيْهِمْ يَكْتُبُونَ

Do they think We cannot hear their secret talk and their private counsel? Yes we can: Our messengers are at their sides, recording everything [80] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 80)

Do they think that we do not hear their decisions and the plans they are concluding to harm the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? Or that we do not hear their hidden thoughts and private conversation? Allah hears their hidden thoughts and their whispers; none of their affair is hidden from Him. Indeed, there is more than that, ‘and Our messengers are with them recording.’ We hear them and are keeping count of all they say, for We have messengers and angels who write and record all they say and do.

If one were to ask, ‘If the True Lord knows and hears all, and nothing of their affair is hidden from Him, then what is the point in writing down their hidden thoughts and whispers and recording them?’ We say that this writing down benefits the angels, and it is for their sake. Thus, even if they did not see the events occur as they are recorded in the Preserved Tablet, they will know that Allah is Wise and Omniscient, and thus increase in certainty above and beyond their current certainty and faith on top of their faith.

= Abu Jahl had suggested of selecting a man from each tribe to partake in the murder of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* so that any requests for retribution would be weakened. Allah killed them all at the Battle of Badr.



**Say [Prophet], ‘If the Lord of Mercy [truly] had
offspring I would be the first to worship [them],
but [81] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 81)**

This is an order to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, ‘Say!’ O Muhammad to those who claim that the All-Merciful has a son. ‘Say’ by way of assumption, ‘if the Most Merciful had a son, then I would be the first of [his] worshippers.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 81) On the basis that the meaning of ‘if’ is conditional, then the meaning is:⁽¹⁾ ‘Were the All-Merciful to have a son, (and it is Allah who is informing me of this fact), then I would worship him before all others, for I take my orders and my understanding from Allah, not you’.

Some of the scholars,⁽²⁾ however, said that the ‘if’ here is a particle of negation, which would mean, ‘Say, “the All-Merciful has no son. And I am the first to negate such for I am the foremost amongst His worshippers and the foremost among those who believe in the oneness of Allah’.

In the Quran, the True Lord *Glorified is He* has described Himself with two adjectives. Some people imagine that these have a single meaning, but so long as two different words are used, then each word must have a meaning specific to it that the other does not afford. The True Lord has described Himself as being ‘One’ and as being ‘Singular’.

His being one means that He is alone, there is no other with Him, and thus it negates multiplicity, As for His being Singular, it means that He is One in and of Himself; He is not composed of parts. We see that when something that is comprised of parts, each part in it is in need of the other parts.

(1) *This is merely posing a hypothetical situation for the purposes of argumentation alone, for it is impossible for Allah to have a son. It is as you might say to someone you are debating, ‘If what you say could be proven then I would be the first to believe it’; and this is way of expressing extreme incredulity. It is like saying, ‘there is no way anyone can believe this’.*

(2) *Among these were Ibn ‘Abbas, Al-Hasan and As-Suddi. Thus, it reads, ‘Say! The All-Merciful has no son’ and this is the end of a sentence. Then a new one starts, ‘I am the first of the worshippers’, meaning, the first of the monotheists among the people of Mecca, believing that Allah has no son.*

So, as long as Allah *Glorified is He* is Singular in and of Himself, He cannot have a son, for the son is a part of his father. We find in a Qudsi Hadith that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Fatima is a piece of me’⁽¹⁾, that is, a part of his spirit.

If we take this principle and trace the ancestry of each one of us, we will necessarily arrive at our forefather Adam *peace be upon him*. We would find that each of us has a portion or an atom that is from our forefather Adam, and it is this atom that witnessed that first covenant that Allah *Glorified is He* took from Adam’s offspring when they were in the atomic stage: ‘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)

This atom is the seed of goodness and the site of faith in a man and from it good works originate. Do you not see man filled with remorse over his sins and resolves to repent? It is a result of the effect this atom has on the human soul, for it was the first to hear Allah’s call and Allah’s message.

The Quran tells us that the jinn are more aware of Allah’s unity than men are. For while men have transgressed against the True Lord *Glorified is He* and attributed a son to Him, the jinn negated that and considered Allah above taking a son or a consort. Read Allah’s saying, ‘And [it teaches] that exalted is the nobleness of our Lord; He has not taken a wife or a son’ (*al-Jinn*: 3), that is to say that it is from His Magnificence that He has neither a wife nor son. The one who reflects will see that the taking of wives and children is one of the sources of corruption in the world. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘O you who have believed, indeed, among your wives and your children are enemies to you, so beware of them.’ (*at-Taghabun*: 14)

(1) It was related by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* [3437, 3450 and 3483] and Muslim in his *Sahih* [4483] on the authority of Al-Musawwir ibn Makhlama. The wording in Muslim is, ‘Fatima is but a part of me, what harms her, harms me.’

We, in our human customs, might say something like, 'Marry a virgin so that she may bear you a son who will look after you in your old age.' But does The True Lord *Glorified is He* take a son because He has a need such as ours? In addition to that, those who say that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* is the son of Allah, what do they say about the time before 'Isa (Jesus)? Did Allah not have a son at that time? And what about it after 'Isa (Jesus)? Where has Allah's 'son' gone? Thus, we see that all this is nothing but lies against Allah.

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

**Exalted be the Lord of the heavens and earth, the Lord of
the Throne – He is far above their false descriptions [82]
(The Quran, az-Zukhruf: 82)**

It is appropriate that this verse should start with the phrase, 'Exalted is the Lord of the heavens and the earth,' after the subject of the previous verse which negated the possibility of Allah *Glorified is He* taking a son. The word 'Exalted' means that Allah *Glorified is He* is transcendent above anything that comes to one's mind.

It is for this reason that the word comes only in the context of astonishing things that are beyond the human intellect, such as: 'Exalted is He who created all pairs - from what the earth grows and from themselves and from that which they do not know.' (*Ya Sin*: 36), and, 'Exalted is He who took His Servant by night from *Al-Masjid Al-Haram* to *Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa*.' (*al-Isra*': 1)

Thus, when one's intellect reaches its limit in questions such as these say, 'Exalted is Allah', and affirm Allah's Transcendence above similarity to creation, and do not judge His Strength by your strength, nor His actions by your actions, nor His Power by your power, but declare Allah's Transcendence in His names, attributes and actions.

After this, reflect upon how the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions in this verse those attributes which are appropriate to the negation of having a son. He says, 'the Lord of the heavens and the earth.' Does the One Who owns the heavens and the earth and that which lies within them need a son? In another verse, He says, 'The creation of the heavens and earth is greater than the

creation of mankind, but most of the people do not know.’ (*Ghafir*: 57) Greater still than the heavens and the earth is the Throne, for He is Lord of the Throne. Thus, we see that Allah *Glorified is He* has absolutely no need of a son. As for Allah’s saying, ‘above what they describe,’ it means by way of lies, or what they attribute to Allah in terms of Him taking a son.

We say that Allah’s Transcendence is pre-eternal. Allah is transcendent and this is one of the attributes of His Essence. He was Transcendent before He created anyone to declare such, and when He brought the creation into existence it declared His Transcendence, ‘Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth exalts Allah, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.’ (*al-Hashr*: 1) This extolling of Allah’s Glory is persistent throughout the present and into the future, ‘Whatever is in the heavens and earth is exalting Him.’ (*al-Hashr*: 24) So, as long as the creation is one system glorifying Allah, then do not deviate from this system yourself and glorify Him too; ‘Exalt the name of your Lord, the Most-High.’ (*al-A‘la*: 1)

فَذَرَّهُمْ يُخَوِّضُوا وَيَلْعَبُوا حَتَّى يُلَاقُوا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِي يُوْعَدُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

**Leave them to wade in deeper and play about, until
they face the Day they have been promised [83]
(The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 83)**

This is a command to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, ‘So leave them’, i.e. quit them and that which they busy themselves with of false speech. The word ‘vainly’ refers to those who venture into talking about that of which they have no knowledge. It is usually used to refer to false speech, and it has connotations of one walking and stumbling in areas unknown, not perceiving what dangers might face him therein. Such a person wrongs himself; one should get a good feel for something before he delves into it and one should be especially careful not to delve into falsehood.

As for Allah’s saying, ‘and amuse themselves,’ Allah has commanded people to be serious about their lives but yet they mess about, Seriousness is the opposite of amusement. The difference between amusement and play is that play is when a person under the age of legal responsibility does something whose only purpose is distraction.

If, however, the person is legally responsible and he does something which has no benefit then this is called amusement. We see that Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'But when they saw a transaction or amusement, [O Muhammad], they rushed to it and left you standing.' (*al-Jumu'a*: 11) Thus, amusement is one's busying oneself with useless play instead of the obligations.


Regarding Allah's saying, 'until they meet their Day which they are promised,' we see that Allah has promised them of this Day and has not created them in vain nor left them to their own devices. Indeed, He has shown them truth and falsehood and promised each a reward in accordance to what each deserves.

So, those who go to the fire have not been wronged by Allah and neither did He take them unawares; rather, He threatened and warned them of this outcome. The Quran is replete with such promises and threats; read for example, 'As for he who gives and fears Allah and believes in the best [reward], We will ease him toward ease. But as for he who withholds and considers himself free of need and denies the best [reward], We will ease him toward difficulty.' (*al-Layl*: 5-10)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* first mentions the good for His servant in His promises and His threats. Yes, indeed, even His threats contain goodness, for the one who warns you of evil before it afflicts you has paid you good service and deserves to be thanked. In this light, we can understand His saying in the chapter of *ar-Rahman* where He enumerates His blessings upon us, 'There will be sent upon you a flame of fire and smoke, and you will not defend yourselves. So which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?' (*ar-Rahman*: 35-36) So can the fire, the flashes and smoke be considered as being from amongst the many blessing of Allah? Yes, they are from His blessings because He warns you against the things that would lead to your falling into them and thus distances you from them.

Returning to the verse, 'So leave them to converse vainly and amuse themselves until they meet their Day which they are promised,' we see that it is an invitation to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to lighten the load upon himself and not overburden himself on account of the obstinacy of his people and their persistence in error. The True Lord *Glorified is He* is

consoling His Messenger and easing his burden. He addressed him in many other verses in similar fashion such as His saying, ‘So do not let yourself perish over them in regret. Indeed, Allah knows of what they do.’ (*Fatir*: 8)


 وَهُوَ الَّذِي فِي السَّمَاءِ إِلَهٌُ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَهٌُ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْعَلِيمُ

It is He who is God in heaven and God on earth; He is the All Wise, the All Knowing [84] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 84)

Some people think that Allah *Glorified is He* is in the sky; if he calls on Him, he does so in a loud voice so that He may hear him, but Allah *Glorified is He* pervades all places and all times; there is no place that can enclose Him and no time that can contain Him, for He is the Creator of time and the Creator of space; and the created cannot encompass its Creator. It is for this reason that we do not say of Allah ‘when?’ or ‘where?’ So, Allah is everywhere⁽¹⁾. Divinity is one of His essential attributes, and one of the attributes of perfection; it cannot be separated from Him and never leaves Him, neither in the heavens, nor on earth.

Some orientalists take issue with this verse because of the repetition of the indefinite noun, ‘deity’. The word is repeated in the indefinite and the rule in grammar is that if a word is repeated in the indefinite, the second word refers to something other than the first, as one might say, ‘I met a man and was kind to a man’. The second man is different from the first. If, however, a definite noun is repeated, the second one is the same as the first. One might say, ‘I met the man and was kind to the man’. So, it is the same man. Thus, this rule of grammar poses a problem for us in relation to this verse, for who would say that there is one Allah in the heavens and one Allah on earth?

We find also in the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* evidence to support this rule, for when he read the verse, ‘And, behold, with every hardship comes ease. Verily, with every hardship comes ease!’ (*ash-Sharh*: 5-6), he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘One hardship

(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.

cannot overcome two eas⁽¹⁾ because the word hardship is mentioned in the definite, while the word ease is mentioned in the indefinite.

Moving on to Allah's saying, 'And He is the Wise, the Knowing.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 84) Wise refers to the one who puts things in their correct place with wisdom, and All Knowing refers to the one who knows what is best for His creation. He knows what will help them in their daily-lives and in preparing for their return to Him. For Allah *Glorified is He* would not give us material nourishment of food, drink, and air and then leave us without a methodology and without a set of values to nourish our souls as He nourished our bodies.

For this reason, this path is said to be spiritual, for it is to the heart what the spirit is to the body. The difference between the two is that the spirit has an appointed time of death, at which it will be separated from the body, whereas the spirituality of values and the path to Allah is everlasting; it accompanies the individual in this world and the next.

وَبَارَكَ الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا
وَعِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

Exalted is He who has control of the heavens and earth and everything between them; He has knowledge of the Hour; you will all be returned to Him [85] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 85)

'The word 'blessed' means an increase in good such that a little gives you much more than you expected. His saying, 'to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth' (*az-Zukhruf*: 85), and in another verse, 'To Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is on the earth' (*al-Hajj*: 64) means that He possesses the container and its contents. In the chapter of *Ta Ha*, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'To Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is on the earth and what is between them and what is under the soil.' (*Ta Ha*: 6)

(1) *Al-Hakim rated it as mursal in his Mustadrak [Hadith 3910] on the authority of Al-Hasan Al-Basri who said, 'The Prophet peace and blessings be upon him went out one day happy and joyful, saying with a smile on his face, 'one hardship will not overcome two eas⁽¹⁾, "And, behold, with every hardship comes ease: verily, with every hardship comes ease!" (ash-Sharh: 5-6) Al-Bayhaqi also related it like this in Shu'ab Al-'Iman [9657].*

We see that the verses encompass the entire universe and deem it all the property of Allah; the whole universe, its heavens and its earth, all that is in the heavens, all that is in the earth, all that is between the heavens and the earth, and what is under the earth; all of it is Allah's property.

At the end of the verse we find that there is a great deal of good buried beneath the ground; if Allah so wills He makes his servants aware of it in accordance with their technological development and progress. There is, as we speak, hidden under the earth water, petrol, minerals, precious stones, and other valuable things. It is as if the True Lord is alerting us, when he says, 'and all that is beneath the soil,' to concern ourselves with what lies underground and unearth it, and to explore it in order to extract the plenty that lies therein. For this reason, we see the geologists, archaeologists and petro-geologists roaming the world from one end to the other searching for these riches, even in the oceans which are included in the meaning of this verse because they are part of the earth they approximate to three quarters of the earth's surface.

Next comes Allah's saying, 'and with whom is knowledge of the Hour and to whom you will be returned.' In both phrases in this verse, Allah has used the rhetorical device of restriction, putting the prepositions and their objects at the beginning of each phrase to emphasise that this knowledge is restricted to Allah alone and none other. Similarly, when He said, 'and unto whom you all shall be brought back!' (*az-Zukhruf*: 85) It means Him alone and none other – you will not be returned except to Him. Thus, this is like a summarised message to mankind: remember your end and your afterlife, remember the reward after the work, and do not be deluded by your blessings for after them you will be called to account and given recompense. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'No! [But) indeed, man transgresses. Because he sees himself self-sufficient; Indeed, to your Lord is the return.' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-8) Hence, everything is both from Allah and is going back to Allah: from Allah in terms of creation, continuance and sustenance, and returning to Allah in terms of recourse and after death.

وَلَا يَمْلِكُ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ الشَّفْعَةَ
إِلَّا مَنْ شَهِدَ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

Those gods they invoke besides Him have no power of intercession, unlike those who bore witness to the truth and recognized it [86] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 86)

Those they call upon instead of Allah, such as the sun, the moon, the stars and idols, all these objects of worship are false. The proof of this is that they are incapable of intercession for others and neither can they defend themselves from harm. They are incapable of intercession because the power of intercession is with whom? It is with Allah. How would Allah accept their intercession when they are the cause of the misguidance of those who ‘but only those who testify to the truth [can benefit], and they know’? This exception means that none will intercede with Allah except he who has borne witness to the truth.

وَلَكِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ فَأَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

If you [Prophet] ask them who created them they are sure to say, ‘God,’ so why are they so deluded? [87] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 87)

So, these believe and admit that Allah is their creator. In another verse, ‘If you asked them, “who created the heavens and earth and subjected the sun and the moon?” they would surely say, “Allah.” Then how are they deluded?’ (*al-Ankabut*: 61) It is strange of them that after admitting this that they should not fully believe in Allah and His Messenger. Hence the end of this verse says, ‘how are they deluded?’ How could they be diverted from this truth when they admit and bear witness that Allah is their creator and the creator of the heavens and the earth. For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* expresses wonderment in the chapter of *al-Baqara* at their disbelief, for which there can be neither justification nor room for consideration. He *Glorified is He* says, ‘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)

Next, Allah says:

وَقِيلَ لَهُ يَرْبِّ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ قَوْمٌ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾
فَاصْفَحْ عَنْهُمْ وَقُلْ سَلَامٌ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾

The Prophet has said, ‘My Lord, truly these are people who do not believe’ [88] but turn away from them and say, ‘Peace’: they will come to know [89] (The Quran, *az-Zukhruf*: 88 - 89)

Who is speaking? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is addressing his Lord, ‘O my Lord, indeed these are,’ that is, the disbelievers of Mecca, ‘are a people who do not believe.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 88)

Notice that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was harmed physically by these people and he was also harmed mentally and spiritually in that they accused him of magic and poetry, and of soothsaying and madness as well as harming his family. He was afflicted by them in both these ways, yet he mentioned none of this at all; all he was concerned about was the issue of their faith. He did not say, ‘O Lord, my people have harmed me and done such and such to me’; he only said, ‘O my Lord, indeed these are a people who do not believe.’ This is what burned in his soul and exasperated Him. It has been related in a sound Hadith that he never once sought revenge for Himself and never once was he angered on his own account. Rather, his jealousy and his anger were only for the sake of Allah and the truth that he brought and to which he called the people. Ahmad Shawqi expressed this in his poetry saying :⁽¹⁾

If he was angered then ‘twas only anger,
for the truth, not from malice or rancour.

(1) The wording of the verse in *Al-Mawsu`a Ash-Shi`riyya* is:

If he was angered then ‘twas only anger,
for the truth, not from malice or hatred.

It is from a poem by the prince of poets Ahmad Shawqi called *Nahj Al-Burda* in the metre known as *Al-Kamil*. The poem consists of 131 couplets, of which this is the 33rd.

It is as though the True Lord *Glorified is He* when swearing on the saying of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'O my Lord, indeed these are a people who do not believe' is saying, 'I swear by the truth of this statement'. The thing to which is being sworn is omitted due to its obvious nature and it is, 'I will punish them in such a way that your heart will be put at rest regarding them. So, do not be perturbed by their lack of faith, for had I so willed, I would have compelled them to have faith, creating them in the likeness of the angels. All that is upon you, O Muhammad, is to bear with them'. 'So turn aside from them and say, "Peace."' Your bearing with them will attract them towards faith in you, and there will arise from amongst them soldiers from the armies of Allah. This was in fact realised in Khalid ibn Al-Walid, 'Ikrima ibn Abu Jahl, 'Amr ibn Al-'As *Allah be pleased with them* and others. These were among the foremost of the disbelievers but were later to become leaders in the ranks of the Muslims.

In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'so forgive with gracious forgiveness,' (*al-Hijr*: 85) because one may forgive someone who has harmed him and yet there remains inside him some remnants of hatred, anger or rage against the offending party. As for gracious forgiveness, it is that which is accompanied by tolerance which uproots any feelings of rage, anger, or hatred.

It is as though the True Lord *Glorified is He* is saying to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*: bear with them gently and be not angry, for your anger affects you, and you have at your side a Lord who is angered on your behalf, so do not you become angry yourself. These are some of the refined etiquettes towards which Islam directs us.

It is well known that the Lawgiver is Wise and that He does not call us to account for the thoughts that occur to our hearts nor our sentiments so long as they are not translated into longing or action. After this, Allah raises you up and invites you to free yourself from just these thoughts if they are bad thoughts towards others.

These stages that we have learnt from Allah's saying, 'and who restrain anger and who pardon the people - and Allah loves the doers of good' (*Al-'Imran*: 134) are as follows: The first stage is to subdue one's anger. The second stage is forgiveness, part of which is to rid oneself of all the bad thoughts such that

one finds one's heart to be unpolluted, with no traces of rage, anger, or hatred remaining. The last stage is to show benevolence to the one who has wronged you and this is the stage of the elect who know well the pardoning nature of the revelation and look to what Allah has in store for them.

There are many people who find it very strange that a person should show benevolence towards someone who has done him harm; 'How could the revelation expect such of us?' they ask. We reply, 'imagine if one of your own children hit another and this one came crying and complaining, to whom would your heart go out and to whom would you incline? Of course, it would go to the one who was struck. Similarly, the True Lord *Glorified is He* takes the side of the weak one who pardons those who have done him wrong.

Al-Hasan Al-Basri was once informed that such-and such a man had backbitten him, at which he sent a plate of dates as a gift to the man. When he was asked about this, he said, 'because he donated his good deeds to me.'⁽¹⁾

Returning to Allah's saying, 'and say, "Peace."' It is understood that the word 'peace' on its own, stripped of 'be upon you' is what is to be said to the one whom you find yourself at enmity with, and from whose company you would rather depart. In real life, when we have our differences with someone and are unable to reach an agreement, we say to him 'peace'. Thus, we see that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* when he was debating his uncle, said to him, 'Peace be upon you! I shall ask my Lord to forgive you' (*Maryam*: 47) meaning 'the peace of farewell, not the peace one wishes another when greeting him.

Finally, regarding Allah's saying, 'But they are going to know,' it means that when you do this they will come to realise the outcome is as you said, and they will come to know how I will punish them on account of their disbelief in you.

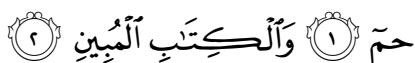
(1) Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali in the *Ihya' 'Ulum Ad-Din* [2/154] relates that a man said to Al-Hasan, 'Of a surety, so and so was backbiting you.' So, he sent him a plate of dates and said, 'It has reached me that you have donated some of your good deeds to me, so I wanted to repay you for them, but forgive me for I am unable to pay you in full.'

the chapter of

ad-Dukhan

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

The chapter of *ad-Dukhan* ⁽¹⁾:



***Ha Mim* [1] By the Scripture that makes things
clear[2] (The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 1-2)**

The chapter of *ad-Dukhan* is one of the *hawamim* chapters, i.e. it begins with the disjointed letters *ha mim*, and we have discussed these letters before, so there is no need for repetition here. The intellect has nothing to say about these letters beyond articulating them as they are, and as the Messenger of Allah articulated them. We do not ask ourselves about their meanings and there is nothing stopping the intellects from speculating in an attempt to derive some of their meanings. If we convince ourselves that something is correct regarding their meanings, we then say that Allah knows best what He means by them

This is because the religion has matters that are connected to creed and matters that are connected to rulings, as well as matters that are connected to the Quran, which expresses both creed and rulings.

(1) The chapter of *ad-Dukhan* is a Meccan chapter by consensus except for His statement ‘Indeed, We will remove the torment for a little.’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 15) It consists of seventy-five verses. It is the 44th chapter in the order of the Quran. Regarding its virtues, it is mentioned that Abu Rafi` said: ‘Whoever reads *ad-Dukhan* on the night of Friday wakes up forgiven, and he will marry from the pure companions who have the most beautiful eyes.’ *Related by Ad-Darimi in his Musnad* .

In each of these three things, there is an unseen and a witnessed. Knowledge of the unseen is entrusted to Allah *Glorified is He* such that man remains incapable in front of Allah's Knowledge and in front of matters that he does not understand. However, he believes in them simply because Allah has informed him of them in His Book or on the tongue of His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and he does not speak out of his own desire.

Amongst the creedal doctrines, for example, is the issue of faith in one God. This is unseen, but it is possible for the intellect to prove it because had there been in heaven or on earth any deities other than Allah, both those realms would surely have fallen into ruin. If there had been numerous deities and each one was concerned with some aspect of the creation, then each one of them would be in need of the others, and thus it would not be right for them to be deities.

Therefore, with intellect it is possible for us to establish that Allah is one deity. However, amongst the creedal doctrines there are matters that the intellect cannot access, and it stops upon hearing them mentioned such as what happens in the grave, the reckoning and the Hereafter.

Likewise, in rulings there is that which is unseen and that which is witnessed. Prayer, in its outward, witnessed sense, brings about equality in worship in the world. When we hear 'Allah is the Greatest' we go to the mosques and we establish ourselves before our Lord, bowing and prostrating, and in this the rulers and the ruled, the rich and the poor the strong and the weak, are all equal. Everyone is submissive to Allah.

This is the aspect that is witnessed in prayer, and it also contains unseen elements that the intellect cannot access. The prayer, in terms of how many units (*raka'at/raka'as*) are to be performed in it, is something we cannot explain. Why does the dawn prayer consist of two units, the noon prayer four and the sunset prayer three? This is why asking about the number of units is futile.

The same goes for the Quran. It also contains unseen elements for which the intellect has no scope, and it is these disjointed letters the knowledge of which we assign to the One Who *Glorified is He* said them.

Allah's statement: 'By the clear Book', i.e. manifest, clear and encompassing everything, represents that which is witnessed. In the beginning of this chapter, the True Lord *Glorified is He* has gathered between the unseen in (*ha mim*) and

the witnessed in ‘By the clear Book.’ They are both from Allah, so there is no oath by this.

Or, the style here is the style of an oath; ‘I swear by *ha mim* and I swear by the clear, manifest Book that is understood by the intellects’. They are both from Allah and they are sworn by. Allah *the Exalted* then says:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ ﴿٣﴾
فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ حَكِيمٍ ﴿٤﴾ أَمْرًا مِّنْ عِندِنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ ﴿٥﴾

**Truly We sent it down on a blessed night — We have
always sent warnings [3] A night when every matter
of wisdom was made distinct [4] At Our command —
We have always sent messages to man[5]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 3-5)**

The matter of bestowing from on high means that something is sent from above to below and it necessitates that there is someone sending it, something being sent, someone to whom the thing is being sent. As long as the One sending is Allah, then bestowing from on high is always from above regardless of the place because He said regarding iron: ‘And We sent down iron, wherein is great military might and benefits for the people,’ (*al-Hadid*: 25). Iron is found inside the earth, and bestowing from on high informs of the sublimity of the One sending. Then, the thing being sent is the Noble Quran to the one who is sent to mankind ‘on a blessed night,’ which is the Night of *Al-Qadr*, meaning the time when the Quran was sent down all at once.

He said ‘night’ because night is the time of stillness and calm such that there is no clamour, noise, or din that can disturb that which is being sent down. Likewise, man is motionless and his limbs are not occupied with anything. Therefore, at night the intellect has everything it needs to be alert and to comprehend and one’s soul is untroubled. This is why you read in the beginning of the chapter of *al-Muzzammil*: ‘O you who wraps himself [in clothing], Arise [to pray] the night, except for a little - Half of it - or subtract from it a little. Or add to it, and recite the Quran with measured recitation. Indeed, We will cast upon you a heavy word. Indeed, the hours of the night

are more effective for concurrence [of heart and tongue] and more suitable for words.' (*al-Muzzammil*: 1-6)

Therefore, the Quran was sent down at night because it is the most appropriate time for it to be sent down, and it was sent down upon the heart of Allah's Messenger in Mecca. So, it is the night in Mecca and nowhere else, and Mecca is in the middle of the world⁽¹⁾ and its centre. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you.' (*al-Baqara*: 143)

Some people say that this night is the Night of *Al-Qadr* because of His statement: 'Verily! We have sent it (this Quran) down in the night of *Al-Qadr* (Decree).' (*al-Qadr*: 1) Others say that it is the fifteenth night of *Sha'ban*, and this issue requires some examination because it was sent down in one of them.

We say that the Quran, before it was sent down and carried out its task in existence, where was it? It was in the Preserved Tablet: 'Indeed, it is a noble Quran. In a Preserved Tablet; None touch it except the purified.' (*al-Waqi'a*: 77-79) And He said: 'And indeed it is, in the Mother of the Book with Us, exalted and full of wisdom.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 4)

The first sending down of the Quran was when it came down all at once from the Preserved Tablet to the lowest sky. However, is that which was recorded on the Preserved Tablet sent down or was it a copy? They said: 'It was a copy after it had been transcribed.'

Then, after that, it came down in instalments according to the circumstances and events, and it was sent down with the Angel Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* on the heart of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and each instalment has an occasion.

Therefore, we have three phases of the Quran being sent down: the first is when it was transcribed from the Preserved Tablet, and this had a time. Then

(1) Dr. Husayn Kamal Ad-Din, professor of surveying and spherical astronomy at King Sa'ud University, discovered that Ennobled Mecca is established in the heart of a circle that passes through parts of all seven continents which form the land. After the studies, he established that the farthest parts of land in Africa, Europe, and Asia are 8,000 kilometress from Mecca.

it came down all at once to the lowest sky, and this also had a time. Then it came down in instalments according to the circumstances. This sending down happened over an extended period of time that included all the events and this took up several years.

From these three phases it is possible to find a way out of this ambiguity; was it the Night of Decree or the fifteenth night of *Sha`ban*? There is no objection to the two nights sharing in this virtue of any one of these phases.

Then, the fifteenth night of *Sha`ban* has its own specific honour and nobility, which is the changing of the direction to which all Muslims pray all over the world. Then there is the fact that facing Jerusalem had a time and wisdom. Too, facing the *Ka`ba* also had a time and wisdom.

Thus, the comparison here is not between truth and falsehood, but rather, the difference between two wise matters. However, this one has a time and that one has a time. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* did not want to make the alteration of the direction to be at the beginning of the obligatory prayer. He wanted it to be during the obligatory prayer, so the command to change was divided into two parts. Thus, he prayed the first half of the prayer towards Jerusalem and the second half of the prayer towards the *Ka`ba*.⁽¹⁾ If this event proves anything, it proves that Jerusalem is a sanctified place for Muslims, just like the *Ka`ba*, and the event of the Night Journey to Jerusalem further confirms this.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted the prayer to be towards Jerusalem for some time and then to be towards the *Ka`ba*, and there is wisdom in both. The first is that Jerusalem is a sanctified place for Muslims. The second is that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had a deep affection for the prayer direction of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*.

This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘We have certainly seen the turning of your face, [O Muhammad], toward the heaven, and We will surely turn you

(1) From Ibn `Umar Allah be pleased with him who said: ‘While the people were performing the dawn prayer in Quba` when someone came to them and said: ‘Indeed, the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him has been commanded on this night to face the Ka`ba, so turn towards it.’ Their faces were towards the Levant and then they turned and faced the Ka`ba.’ Related by Muslim in his *Sahih* (830) and Al-Bayhaqi in *As-Sunnan Al-Kubra* (2/2)

to a *qiblah* with which you will be pleased. So turn your face toward *Al-Masjid Al-Haram*.' (*al-Baqara*: 144)

The prayer was made obligatory for Allah's Messenger after his Ascension into heaven from Jerusalem, and this prayer was towards a direction and this direction must inevitably take both a legislative principle and a principle of continuation. Allah made it a test for the Muslims and the non-Muslims because when the direction of prayer was towards Jerusalem, they said: 'What has made him turn from the direction of Ibrahim (Abraham) to the direction of Dawud (David) and Sulaiman (Solomon)?' We said: It was in order for Jerusalem to be one of the sanctified places in Islam and so that the non-Muslims would not have exclusive possession over it.

The Jews received news of this matter and they used it to spread doubt. They said: 'If Muhammad is rejecting our religion then why does he pray in our direction?' Therefore, it was a test for both sides so that man could adhere to divine instructions without the intellect interfering.

They said regarding the blessed night that it is the night of 'being free', the night of the contract, and the night of mercy. The night of *bara'a* is taken from the *sakk* (receipt) that is given by the alms (*zakat*) worker to the taxpayer when he gives him Allah's right regarding his wealth, which is the *zakat*. The worker gives him a certificate of being free which proves that he has given his *zakat* and freed himself of his responsibility therein, and the word *sakk* carries the same meaning.

The night of mercy is because they said: 'It is mercy towards Allah's Messenger first and foremost because his soul was longing to face the direction of Ibrahim (Abraham).

Regarding Allah's statement: 'Indeed, We sent it down during a blessed night. Indeed, We were to warn [mankind],' after having mentioned sending down He mentions warning; and sending down is in order to warn because the legislative maxim is that averting harm takes precedence over bringing about benefit⁽¹⁾, so He mentioned warning before giving glad tidings.

(1) One of the proofs of jurisprudence and its principles is the statement of the jurists: (Averting harms takes priority over bringing about benefit, and the greater harm must be averted first).=

We previously said: Imagine that someone throws you an apple, and at the same time, someone throws a stone at you. With which one are you going to be preoccupied? There is no doubt that you will be more concerned with protecting yourself from the stone than receiving the apple.

This is also the case with the Quranic style. The phrase ‘We were to warn’ indicates that warning was in the past and it is continuing in the present. This is because the True Lord *Glorified is He* is not governed by a specific time because He is the creator of time. Something created by Allah cannot hold sway over Allah, and as long as time is created by Allah, then this is the case.

The past, present and future apply to us human beings. As for Allah, all time is the same for Him. When you read, for example: ‘for Allah is indeed Much-Forgiving, a Dispenser of Mercy’ (*al-Ahzab*: 50), you say that He was, He still is and He will be in the future because as long as He exists since pre-eternity, and change does not happen to Him, then He is Much-Forgiving and a Dispenser of Mercy.

Regarding His statement: ‘On that night is made distinct every precise matter - [Every] matter [proceeding] from Us,’ it means that on this night ‘made distinct every precise matter.’ It is clarified, explained, and presented in detail. The difference here is not between truth and falsehood, but rather between matters that are both true and each has wisdom in its time.

Contemplate on the thing itself being described as (wise) because it is a thing belonging to Allah: ‘[Every] matter [proceeding] from Us,’ which means that there is no wisdom that reaches this thing that has come from The True Lord. ‘Indeed, We were to send [a messenger].’ This means: ‘We did not leave our creation to be neglected. Rather, We created them and we sent to them those who would take them by the hand to the straight path, show them guidance, and make it clear to them.

When the True Lord created the first creation He also sent the first messenger to guide them, and this is why Adam *peace be upon him* was the first

= This means that if a matter is caught between averting harm and bringing about benefit, averting harm has priority over bringing about benefit. If the matter is caught between averting two harms then averting the greater harm takes priority over averting any other harm.

human being sent as a messenger because the Creator created man. Why? He created him to populate the earth: 'He has produced you from the earth and settled you in it.' (*Hud*: 61) This means that He asked you to populate it, and populating requires rightness, while corruption is held in check. The least that can be done, if we do not increase in rightness, is to leave alone that which is right.

We clarified this matter by using the example of a well in the desert. We said: If you are not going to build a wall around it to protect it from earth creeping towards it, or install a device that will help people extract the water, then the least you can do is leave it as it is and not destroy it.

The same goes for man in populating the earth; he must use his intellect with regards to self-evident truths so that with them he can arrive at theories that will improve his life. We have the example of wool, fur, and hair. Each one of them has specific qualities and that to which they are suited. Allah says, 'and from their wool, fur, and hair is furnishing and enjoyment for a time.' (*an-Nahl*: 80)

It is known that fur is taken from camels, wool is taken from sheep and hair is taken from goats, and each one of them has specific qualities that man uses as clothing and in his home. This is part of populating the earth such that if we were to look at the maxims of engineering and the theories we would find that they initially rely on something self-evident that is found in the universe.

Therefore, any advancement in the universe comes from something self-evident that has been granted by Allah, and intellects, being used with regards to self-evident truths, are part of the populating of the earth.

This is why, when you reflect on how the Quran addresses mankind, you find that it begins with simple matters that are far from anything intellectually complicated. It talks to them first about the way and what will make their lives upright and bring harmony to their daily lives. It speaks to intellects according to their intellectual advancement.

Whenever man's intellect has matured and the methodology has become solid and manifested in people's attitude and action, it (the Quran) then begins to talk to them about rational theories, and it says to them: indeed the earth is spherical and it revolves around the sun because the intellects have become prepared for research and investigation.

Look at roads, for example, how primitive they were; merely a trail in the desert wide enough for one camel. Look at how they have developed today and they have been supplied with means of rest, security, speed, and safety. Indeed, it is because the intellect has been used to make progress.

Did man not learn from the crow how to bury the dead? Did we not learn from dogs and do we not use them now, despite scientific developments in investigating clues and identifying criminals, by using their sense of smell? We have taken natural matters that Allah has granted us and built on them, and we have developed them in order to populate the earth.

Populating the earth cannot be done unless the way is straight first, as it is the foundation of advancement and the foundation of betterment because when the Creator *Glorified is He* created the creation, He laid down a way for it that would govern it and regulate its daily activities, by saying ‘do such-and-such’ and ‘do not do such-and-such’.

If the creation is upright upon the way of its Lord and Creator, then its life is upright, and if it deviates and goes astray, the shame and nakedness of the community become clear and the symptoms of corruption emerge and come in between people.

We previously gave an example of this with the instruction manual that the manufacturer provides in order for the product to be protected and maintained. Likewise, if you travel along the way of your Creator, you will never be afflicted with ruin, and this is where the mission of the messengers comes in; they explain and confirm the way of (do such-and-such) and (do not do such-and-such). Even Adam, what happened when he contravened the way? Our Lord said to him: ‘Eat whatever you want from Paradise except for this tree’⁽¹⁾, and they ate from it. What happened?

When he contravened he was afflicted with ruin. His nakedness became manifest when he ate from the tree and he was forced to do what Allah had not obliged him to do before such as release wind and excrement and have an

(1) Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And We said, “O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise and eat therefrom in [ease and] abundance from wherever you will. But do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers.”’ (*al-Baqara*: 35)

upset stomach. He did not experience any of these things before he contravened Allah's Command.

Allah's statement: '[Every] matter [proceeding] from Us. Indeed, We were to send [a messenger]' means that we have been sending messengers to those whom we have appointed as vicegerents on earth so that their daily activities can be safe from ruin and so that society can be safe from evil; people supporting one other and not going against one another.

رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٦﴾

**As a mercy [Prophet] from your Lord
who sees and knows all [6]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 6)**

Sending is a mercy from Allah to His servants because it is a matter for us, you and me, from One Who is above us. We do not find any deficiency therein, as no one from amongst us looks down on anyone else. We receive our commands from Allah. This is why simple people like farmers say: 'The finger that is hurt by the law does not bleed' because everyone submits to Allah's Commands and rulings and is pleased with them.

Therefore, our lives are upright when we travel along the way. This is why He called it 'the straightway' and He called it 'the straight path', i.e. in the middle; not inclining this way or that way. This is because He wants to save you effort and time, and all of this is from the fruits of the way and travelling along the straight path.

This is a mercy from Allah to us, and what a great mercy it is that He has not left us to experiment and disturb one another until we arrive at correctness, the truth, and the straight path. It is from His Mercy towards us that He has not left us to oppose one another and clash with one another. Rather, He has laid down laws for us and He has laid down a way for us to travel along from the very beginning.

There is a difference between a matter that makes you alter and straighten your course and a matter that is straight from the very beginning. It is from Allah's Mercy towards us that He has made us travel in one direction, such

that all activities are directed towards construction and all efforts are directed towards one objective. All individuals co-operate therein and all individuals support each other.

Otherwise, if activities had been allowed to conflict with one another they would have demolished and destroyed. What is the point of you building something if someone else is going to destroy it? As the poet said:

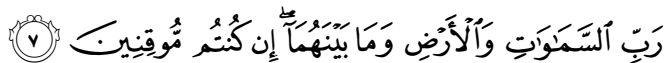
When will the building reach its completion, one day

If you are building it while someone else is destroying it

Reflect on the Quranic expression: ‘as mercy from your Lord.’ He did not say ‘as a mercy from Allah’, because The Lord is the one who is in charge of nurturing and taking care of you. We said previously that divinity is a responsibility and lordship is a gift. This mercy is a mercy from the Lord, the Merciful Caretaker; like a mother who nurtures her child, showing compassion.

As long as Allah *Glorified is He* is your Lord, your Nurturer and your Creator then it is obligatory upon you to obey Him and not exit from His way. ‘Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Knowing.’ Allah is the All-Hearing with regards to all of mankind’s pains and grievances, if they proclaim them. He is the All Knowing with regards to their states and what their hearts possess if they conceal it within themselves even though the address here is in the singular form and directed at the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

In the statement, ‘...as a mercy from your Lord’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 6), Allah is addressing Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This is a special care bestowed by Allah upon His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and a manifestation of his rank with Allah. Allah’s Eye is watching over him, and he is so dear to Him that He will not allow him to be afflicted with any harm or pain on behalf of his people. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the most precious human being to Allah, and that is why He edified him in a way that makes him not only guided, within himself, but also guidance for mankind.



**Lord of the heavens and the earth and everything
between — if only you people were firm believers [7]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 7)**

After Allah says: ‘as a mercy from your Lord...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 6), He confirms it with the statement: ‘Lord of the heavens and the earth and everything between...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 7), and then He attributes this to their conviction: ‘...if only you people were firm believers!’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 7) As if Allah is sure that they, when asked, will say nothing but that they are firm believers! So, if they are certain that Allah is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, then why do you deny His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*?

Indeed, the universal signs clearly indicate the Creator, Exalted, and *Glorified is He*; this sky that shelters you, this earth that carries you and all the secrets and treasures in between. Indeed, all the riches that are in the earth are proof of Allah. If what you see in the earth and in the heavens is the realm of the *mulk* (the corporeal visible realm), then what do you think of the realm of the *malakut* (the spiritual invisible realm)?


You can know the realm of the *mulk* by means of your senses. As for the realm of the *malakut*, it is unseen. We know nothing of it apart from what Allah has told us, as when He said about prophet 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).

Hence, back to ‘...if only you people were firm believers!’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 7) The term ‘firm believers’ means to embrace belief without doubt; not in knowledge, vision, or reality. We explained earlier about the certainty of knowledge, the certainty of vision, and the certainty of truth. Certainty, whether in knowledge, vision, or truth, is that firm belief which carries a judgment that does not swerve.

These three phases are mentioned in His saying: ‘No indeed! If only you knew for certain. You will most definitely see hellfire; you will see it with the eye of certainty. On that Day, you will be asked about your pleasures.’ (*at-Takathur*: 5-8)

And Allah says in the chapter of *al-Waqi`a*: ‘but if he is one of those who denied the truth and went astray, he will be welcomed with scalding water. He will burn in hell. This is the certain truth: [Prophet], glorify the name of your Lord the Supreme.’ (*al-Waqi`a*: 92-96)

However, were these people really certain that Allah is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them? The Quran says to them: ‘...if only you people were firm believers!’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 7) ‘If’ here indicates doubt in their conviction because if they had been confident they would have believed in Allah’s Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and accepted him as true. They acknowledge that Allah is their Creator and the Creator of the entire universe, but despite that they oppose Allah’s religion. Why? This is because religion restricts their activity and deprives them of their desires and prevents them from benefiting from the corruption that is present in their society! True religion will regulate their leadership and make masters and slaves equal. Therefore, they rejected the true religion because of the method it came with and they inclined toward a false religion because it does not have any method; commands or prohibitions.


 لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

There is no god but Him: He gives life and death
— He is your Lord and the Lord of your
forefathers[8] (The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 8)

The True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* wants our words to be applied to our actions. Regarding the phrase: ‘There is no deity...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 8), the deity is the true object of worship because when they worshipped the idols they called them deities. This is according to their claims and to how they imagined them! However, they are false deities and to call them so is also false because the deity is the true object of worship who has a method and this method is based on that proof.

As for their claims, they are without any proof. It is nothing but a form of worship that satisfies the inclination of the soul towards religiosity, even if the object of worship is an idol that has no commandments and no way.

Religiosity, as we have said, is a natural disposition within man, and actual events and experience confirm this. When someone's sustenance becomes constricted, even the disbeliever will say, 'O Lord!' He will seek refuge in the true object of worship and he will not deceive himself. He knows that the adversity that has afflicted him can only be removed by Allah.

That is why no one said, 'O Lat' or 'O 'Uzza' (idols worshipped by Quraysh). However, unfortunately, when Allah removes their adversity and relieves them of their distress, they go back to their old ways, and the Quran talks about this a lot. Allah says: 'When trouble befalls man he cries out to Us, whether lying on his side, sitting, or standing, but as soon as We relieve him of his trouble he goes on his way as if he had never cried out to Us to remove his trouble. In this way, the deeds of such heedless people are made attractive to them.' (*Yunus*: 12)

People keep forgetting that when religion restricts your activity in that which is impermissible, it also restricts the activity of everyone else for your sake. It tells you: 'As an individual in society; do not steal from the others'. It also tells everyone else not to steal from you. Hence, you are the first person to benefit from implementing Allah's method.

After Allah says: 'There is no deity but Him...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 8), He mentions the proof for it: '...He gives life and death...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 8) because the matter of giving life and death belongs to Allah alone, and He has no rival therein. Those who are enjoying life are disturbed by nothing other than the fact that they see death all around as it looms above them on the very verge of snatching them away.

Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* is mentioning here something that He loves because the One Who owns your life and owns your death is Allah, so it is not right for you to be heedless of Him, or to deviate from His way and His path in favour of another path.

So, the attribute: '...He gives life and death...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 8) surely befalls others, yet His attributes include Him being Ever-Living and Ever-Watchful, as in the verse of the Throne: 'Allah – there is no deity but Him, the Ever Living, the Ever Watchful....' (*al-Baqara*: 255) Some people say that

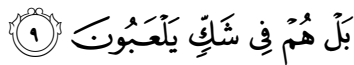
‘The Ever-Living’ is the greatest name of Allah because it is the foundation from which all other attributes stem.

They also said that ‘The Ever-Living’ is the greatest name pertaining to giving, while Allah is the greatest name pertaining to worship because the meaning of the word Allah, is the One Who is worshipped and obeyed in everything that He commands.

As long as He is obeyed in everything He commands, so when you call Allah, you say: ‘In the Name of Allah’ meaning: ‘In the name of Allah I embark upon this action’ because any action requires energy and perception to be initialized; it also requires wisdom.

These things are provided by whom? They are provided by Allah because He alone is the One Who encompasses all the attributes of perfection and from His attributes He gives you abundantly. Thus, it is obligatory to seek help from Him and to rely on Him. Whoever says that the greatest name is the (Ever-Living) has his eyes set on ‘giving’, while whoever says that it is (Allah) has his eyes set on ‘legal responsibility’.

As for the statement: ‘...He is your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers.’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 8), Allah wants to debunk the disbelievers who oppose Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because they said: ‘...Behold, we found our forefathers agreed on what to believe – and, verily, it is but in their footsteps that we follow!’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 23) Thus, Allah wants to expose their lie in this statement because if they had been true followers of their forefathers, they would have pursued the path of Adam *peace be upon him*. However, they deviated from it and went astray from his guidance until the whole concept underlying faith got deformed, so Allah sent numerous messengers to guide them.



**Yet in [their state of] doubt they take nothing
seriously [9] (The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 9)**

Here, the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* is bringing together two attributes of theirs: 1) they are in doubt of Allah’s religion and, 2) they take nothing

seriously. Only one of these attributes would suffice to describe their isolation from the realm of faith. As for '...in their state of doubt...' (*ad-Dukhan: 9*), to explain the meaning of doubt (*shakk*), we say that the logical variations are six, and they include knowing; which is to believe a thing that is supported by actual fact, ignorance; which is to believe a matter that contradicts actual fact, and imitation; which is to believe something that you are unable to prove, like a child imitating his parent and saying, 'Allah is One', but he can not establish any proof for it. Then there is doubt which is to have two matters of equal weight before you; neither has preference to the other. If you do prefer one of them to the other, then the thing which you preferred is a speculation and that which you dismissed is an illusion.

So, their 'doubt' is that they held disbelief and belief at the same rank. Not just that but they also '...take nothing seriously...' (*ad-Dukhan: 9*) because if they had only been in doubt and had been serious about researching and contemplating, they would have arrived at the truth. Instead, they were playing around and toying. They had no desire to arrive at the truth.

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

فَارْتَقِبْ يَوْمَ تَأْتِي السَّمَاءُ بِدُخَانٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿١٠﴾ يَغْشَى النَّاسَ هَذَا عَذَابٌ
أَلِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾ رَبَّنَا اكْشِفْ عَنَّا الْعَذَابَ إِنَّا مُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

**[Prophet], watch out for the Day when the sky brings
forth clouds of smoke for all to see [10] It will envelop
the people. They will cry, 'This is a terrible torment!
[11] Lord relieve us from this torment! We believe! [12]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan: 10 - 12*)**

The True Lord *Glorified is He* is making it clear that He will not leave these denying doubters to His messengers, these people who play and toy around, will have a day in which Allah will exact revenge from them. He tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'watch out...' (*ad-Dukhan: 10*), or wait '...for the Day when the sky brings forth clouds of smoke for all to see.' (*ad-Dukhan: 10*)

Smoke is formed when gases blend together and fill the air, like the mist that we see in the morning, and when it gets so dense it impairs visibility. This is because the blend of tiny particles blocks the passage of sight. Then it causes the air to become constricted and the same thing happens to breathing. If lack of visibility combines with constricted breathing, our agony intensifies and becomes too much to withstand.

They say that the smoke here is an indication of the drought that afflicted the people and the famine that befell them because when they exaggerated in denying Allah's Messenger and they became severe in harming him and his companions, he supplicated against them saying: 'O Allah! Be severe with the tribe of Mudar! Inflict years of drought upon them like the years of drought of Prophet Joseph (Yusuf).'⁽¹⁾

They were afflicted with famine and drought until they were compelled to eat carrion, dead dogs and *ilhiz*, which is wool or fur mixed with dry blood, and until they raised a fuss with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and asked him to supplicate to Allah for them and ask Him to lift what had befallen them.

Allah made their lie clear to Prophet Muhammad; if We were to lift their suffering they would go back to their disbelief and denial.

'It will envelop the people.' (*ad-Dukhan*: 11) means it will encompass and cover them. '...They will cry!' (*ad-Dukhan*: 11) because it deprives them of visibility and constricts their breathing, so they supplicated fervently: 'Lord relieve us from this torment! We believe!' (*ad-Dukhan*: 12) and Allah knows that they are lying when they say this.

Allah says afterwards:

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (762, 951, 2715, 3124) and Muslim in his *Sahih* (1082, 1083) from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him

أَفَى لَهُمُ الذِّكْرَى وَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٣﴾ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا مُعَلَّمٌ مَجْنُونٌ ﴿١٤﴾

How will this [sudden] faith benefit them? When a prophet came to warn them plainly [13] they turned their backs on him, saying, ‘He is tutored! He is possessed!’ [14] (The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 13-14)

His statement: ‘How will this [sudden] faith benefit them?’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 13) means: from where did they take an admonition? From where did they get the faith which they claim? ‘...When a prophet came to warn them plainly’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 13) with signs that are greater than the smoke, with clear, established miracles such as this wise and inimitable Book, this ability that keeps the universe in motion in a unique way, this path that ensures the individual’s and the society’s wellbeing, the clear elucidation, the abundant goodness and benefits they are accustomed to, and yet they still averted and lied.

‘They turned their backs on him...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 14), i.e. they shunned him ‘...saying, “He is tutored! He is possessed!”’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 14) which mean they did not shun him and leave him to himself. Rather, they transgressed against him in speech, and accused him of being a liar; ‘...tutored...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 14) means that he was taught by someone else.

Likewise, Allah says in another place: ‘...It is a man who teaches him’...’ (*an-Nahl*: 103), and Allah refuted them and invalidated their accusation: ‘...but the language of the person they allude to is foreign, while this revelation is in clear Arabic.’ (*an-Nahl*: 103)

They said that he was frequenting a Persian man who was teaching him the Quran. Allah debunked their statement that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was a ‘...madman...’: ‘For this fellow-man of yours is not a madman’ (*at-Takwir*: 22), and ‘Nun. By the pen! By all they write! Your Lord’s Grace does not make you [Prophet] a madman: you will have a never-ending reward –truly you have a strong character.’ (*al-Qalam*: 1-4) Since he has a sublime character, then he does not go beyond the standards of virtue, and no actions come from him except via reflection, comprehension, and tact, so how far removed is this from madness?!

إِنَّا كَاشِفُو الْعَذَابِ قَلِيلًا إِنَّكُمْ عَائِدُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

**We shall hold the torment back for a while — you
are sure to return [to Us] [15]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 15)**

This means the suffering that has befallen them in this life, and what Allah calls ‘a nearer torment’: ‘We shall certainly make them taste a nearer torment [in this life] prior to the greater torment so that perhaps they may return [to the right path].’ (*as-Sajda*: 21) That is to say; We will lift the smoke punishment, as well as the famine and hunger that compelled them to eat carrion. We will lift it for a little while to affirm for them that they are liars even in front of themselves so that they can be convinced of this fact because those who believe in Allah know it and they bear witness to it. As for these people, they reject it.

Or, their lying will be revealed in front of the youth. Amongst them were those whom disbelief could not vanquish, and this disbanded their ranks. The disbelievers were shown for who they really are and their children, who follow these developments, did not imitate them. They could clearly see the lying of their parents and grandparents.

Indeed, we have seen the children of disbelievers who became Muslims and did very well in Islam, the likes of ‘Ikrima ibn Abu Jahl and others; those who realized the lying of their parents and their lack of faith.

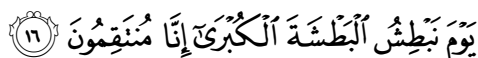
Amongst these people was Mus‘ab ibn ‘Umayr, a pampered youth of Quraysh; the wealthiest of the wealthy. He was enjoying all kinds of comforts and luxuries when he saw the contradictions that his people were upon, and he left disbelief for Islam. He left all the lures of luxury and comfort and was pleased with a primitive way of life.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings upon him* saw him in Medina after he had emigrated and he was wearing a sheepskin on his shoulder. He was astonished and said: ‘Look at your Companion. Look at what faith has done to him.’⁽¹⁾

(1) From ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab who said: ‘The Prophet looked at Mus‘ab ibn ‘Umayr approaching, and he was wearing a ram hide. He was shocked and he said: “Look at=

When Mus`ab died, they did not find anything to shroud him with.⁽¹⁾ These are the youth whom faith snatched from the jaws of disbelief.

His statement: ‘...while you are sure to return [to Us].’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 15) means going back once again to their disbelief, their stubborn rejection, and their denial of Allah’s Messenger.



And on the Day We seize [them] mightily We shall exact retribution [16] (The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 16)

Remember this day and do not be heedless of it ‘And on the Day We seize [them] mightily...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 16). *Al-Batsh* (‘...seize...’) means taking someone by force and hitting him so hard till he cannot recognize which body part is being struck. When we say that someone *batasha* with someone else, it means he hit him so hard paying no attention to which body part got the blow. Allah describes His seizing as being ‘...mighty...’ (*kubra*) to emphasise its sternness and severity on the disbelievers.

‘...We shall exact retribution.’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 16) Retribution indicates being even, so the act of seizing is not an aggression, but rather, a recompense for their denial and harm to Allah’s Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Seizing is therefore a retribution of the same nature as the initial action, and if it were not for this seizing it would not have been fair or just for the believers to endure all this harm, adversity and oppression, while the disbelievers are left to act so oppressively and tyrannically.

= *this man whose heart Allah has enlightened. Indeed, I saw him with parents who were feeding him the best of food and drink, but the love of Allah and His Messenger called him to what you see before you.*” Narrated by Abu Na`im in *Hilyat Ul-Awliya`* (1/108) and *Al-Iraqi*, in his examination of the Hadiths in the *Ihya`* (4/295) said that its chain of transmission is good.

(1) Mus`ab ibn `Umayr was killed on the day of Uhud and he left nothing behind but a date. ‘When we shrouded his head, his legs would show and when we shrouded his legs his head would show, so Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: “Cover his head and put some straw over his legs.”’ Narrated by *At-Tirmidhi* in his *Sunnan* (2788), *Ahmad* in his *Musnad* (20165,25956), *Al-Bayhaqi* in his *Sunnan* (4/7) and *Mushkil Al-Athar* by *At-Tahawi* (3419).

The act of seizing had to happen to the disbelievers so that the believers could see the fruits of their faith and how Allah had saved them with it, till they rejoiced. The disbelievers also needed to see the fruits of their disbelief and their stubborn opposition, so they would grieve and feel remorse and pain.

In more than one place the Noble Quran relates to us a dialogue between the people of paradise and the people of the fire, which clearly describes the joy of the believers and the regret and remorse of the disbelievers: ‘The people of the fire will call to the people of paradise, “Give us some water, or any of the sustenance Allah has granted you!” and they will reply, “Allah has forbidden both to the disbelievers.”’ (*al-A‘raf*: 50)

His statement: ‘...We shall exact retribution!’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 16) is an indication of the fairness of the heavens, as if Allah is saying to them: ‘Do not blame us for taking you to task like this; you are Our making. We are more compassionate towards you than a mother towards her children, but We must exact revenge in order to balance things and prevent any sedition.

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَجَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ كَرِيمٌ
أَنْ أَدُّوا إِلَيَّ عِبَادَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ

We tested the people of Pharaoh before them: a noble messenger was sent to them [17] saying, ‘Hand the servants of God over to me! I am a faithful messenger who has been sent to you [18] (The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 17-18)

As if He is saying to them: ‘You are nothing new in this regard. You have been preceded by other nations that denied their messengers, so they were afflicted similar to the way you have been afflicted’. ‘We tested...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 17) meaning: We afflicted and We tested, and *fitna* (trying) is not blameworthy in itself. Rather, it is blameworthy because of its result, in the same way that an exam is not praised or blamed because for itself, but rather for its outcome or result.

You know the story of the people of Pharaoh ‘...a noble messenger was sent to them...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 17); he is prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*

and he is noble in the eyes of Allah, who sent him. It is from his nobility that Allah spoke to him from behind a barrier, and this is because he would not be addressing moral or social corruption, but rather, ideological corruption.

So, Allah *the Exalted*, was preparing him for his meeting with the head of disbelief, i.e. Pharaoh, who had reached such a degree of misguidance that he had declared divinity. He said to the people: 'I am your Lord All-Highest!'

It is because of this that Moses's (Musa's) mission was difficult and arduous, and that is why his Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* trained him to use signs and miracles before presenting himself to Pharaoh.

Read: 'What is that in your right-hand O Musa (Moses)? "It is my staff," he said, "I lean on it; restrain my sheep with it; I also have other uses for it." Allah said, "Throw it down, O Musa (Moses)." He threw it down and- behold! It became a fast-moving snake.' (*Ta Ha*: 17-20)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* informed Musa (Moses) of the staff's mission in the ideological battle that he would have with Pharaoh and trained him on how to handle it, so that when Pharaoh confronts him he can be firm and reassured that Allah will help him and support him. We need to mention here that the orientalist have hunted down this story and accused the Quran of being redundant.

But, this only shows their lack of understanding for the verses within their context. The story of the staff is actually mentioned three times; one time between Musa (Moses) and his Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* when He was training him and preparing him for this ordeal; a second time when he faced Pharaoh and a third time when he faced Pharaoh's magicians. Hence, each phase had its wisdom, and there is no redundancy in the matter; they are different situations and each one took place in its appointed time.

As for the verse: 'Hand the servants of Allah over to me...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 18), when you hear 'Hand...over to me...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 18), know that there is a trust that must be handed over, so what is the trust that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* is asking his people to hand over? The 'trust' which Musa (Moses) requested from Pharaoh's people was to let him take the Israelites and end their humiliating suffering at the hands of Pharaoh's people, and this was Moses's (Musa's) first mission. As for him inviting Pharaoh, this was peripheral

to the main mission. His discussion with Pharaoh was an accessory to his mission and to the legislation that he brought to the Israelites.

The reason behind Pharaoh's people oppressing the Israelites is that when the Hyksos entered Egypt they caused turmoil, and the Israelites supported the Hyksos and helped them. When the Hyksos left Egypt, the Egyptians had no enemy other than the Israelites, and that is why they oppressed them.

The Quran relates: '...slaughtering your sons and sparing (only) your women....' (*al-Baqara*: 49) Thus, Musa (Moses) came originally to save the Israelites from their suffering and to take them out of Egypt. The True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* was kind to the Israelites because they were the believers at that time, while all other people were idolaters.

Therefore, the meaning of 'Hand the servants of Allah over to me...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 18) is: 'Give me the Israelites whom you have punished and leave me with their affair'.

It is from the inimitability of the Quran to address the ruler of Egypt as 'Pharaoh', while during the era of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* he is addressed as the 'King': 'And (one day) the King said: "Behold, I saw (in a dream) seven fat cows being devoured by seven gaunt ones..."' (*Yusuf*: 43).

It has been confirmed that while the Hyksos were in Egypt they changed the title from 'Pharaoh' to 'King', and they were in Egypt in the days of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph).

His statement: '...I am a faithful messenger who has been sent to you.' (*ad-Dukhan*: 18) means: I am entrusted with my message from Allah and I am carrying it out as it must be.

وَأَنْ لَا تَعْلُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنِّي آتِيكُمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ مُبِينٍ
وَإِنِّي عُدْتُ بِرَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ أَنْ تَرْجُمُونِ

**Do not consider yourselves to be above God! I come
to you with clear authority [19] I seek refuge in my
Lord and yours against your insults! [20]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 19-20)**

His statement: 'Do not consider yourselves to be above Allah!' (*ad-Dukhan*: 19) takes the matter back to its true point of reference. He did not say 'do not

consider yourselves to be above me', but rather, above Allah, i.e. the battle is not between you and me, but rather, between you and Allah, who has sent me. Thus, when you act haughtily and stubbornly you are not doing so against me, but rather, against Allah, who commanded me and sent me to you.

'...I come to you with clear authority' (*ad-Dukhan*: 19), i.e. with a clear proof and obvious sign, which is the staff. The staff is a sign which is of the same nature as the magic that Pharaoh's people had excelled in. However, it is not of the same kind because magic, in reality, is nothing more than a visual illusion, as Allah says: '...casting a spell on people's eyes, striking fear into them...' (*al-A'raf*: 116).

That is why, when the magicians saw the staff, they snatched what they had done and fell down in prostration to Musa (Moses), or rather his Lord, without waiting for permission from Pharaoh. Why? Because they saw something that was other than optical visual illusion! It was actual reality, and they knew more than anyone did what magic was.

His statement: 'Do not consider yourselves to be above Allah!' (*ad-Dukhan*: 19) means: I am not speaking on behalf of myself, but rather, because of a command from the heavens. This statement also contains an indication towards invalidating their claimed divinity, i.e. you know amongst yourselves that you are not gods and that this is a false claim. That is why it made them scared of The True Deity.

'I seek refuge in my Lord and yours against your stoning.' (*ad-Dukhan*: 20) means: I have sought refuge in Allah and with Him I have protected myself against your harm. When Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said this, contemplate how he sought refuge and protection of the Stronghold who would rescue whoever sought refuge in Him.

What happened after he sought refuge in Allah? Allah sent him a man from Pharaoh's people who believed in Musa (Moses) and this man defended him.

His act of seeking refuge would also benefit him in the future during the incident of parting the sea, when Pharaoh and his army were catching up with them at the seashore, till the companions of Musa (Moses) said: 'Behold, we

shall certainly be overtaken (and defeated)!’ (*ash-Shu’ara’*: 61) They were not hopeful of being saved!

As for Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* he was so full of trust in his Lord. He said: ‘No! My Lord is with me: He will guide me!’ (*ash-Shu’ara’*: 62) He said this out of certainty because he had experienced it before and it was decisive.

Therefore, when the matter became serious and the means became constricted he sought refuge in Allah with certainty and reassurance. Then Allah revealed to Him: ‘...Strike the sea with your staff!’...’ (*ash-Shu’ara’*: 63), and Musa (Moses) did not deny the command and did not hesitate even though it was something unbelievable and beyond any perception. However, his trust in Allah had been established from the beginning and it encouraged him to obey the command and not hesitate.

‘...Strike the sea with your staff!’...’ (*ash-Shu’ara’*: 63) It was a miracle to part the sea, and each part was like a vast mountain. Allah saved Musa (Moses) and those who were with him and He destroyed Pharaoh and his army. This is from His absolute power to destroy and save at the same time because things are not affected in and of themselves but because of Allah’s Will.

The statement: ‘...against your stoning’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 20) is proof that stoning existed amongst the previous nations who denied their messenger.

وَإِنْ لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُوا لِي فَأَعْلَزُونِ ﴿٢١﴾ فَدَعَا رَبَّهُ أَنْ هَبْ لِي قَوْمًا يُحَرِّمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

**If you do not believe me, just let me be [21]
[Moses] cried to his Lord, ‘These people are
evildoers!’ [22] (The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 21-22)**

It is as if Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* is saying, ‘If you do not believe me in what I am saying then the least you can do is leave me alone and not harm me’.

His statement: ‘[Musa (Moses)] cried to his Lord, “These people are evildoers!”’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 22) contains an indication of his despair that they would ever become righteous, so he complained to Allah and asked to be freed from them.

فَأَنسِرْ بِعِبَادِي لَيْلًا إِنَّكُمْ مُتَّبَعُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَأَتْرُكُ الْبَحْرَ رَهَوًا إِنَّهُمْ جُنْدٌ مُّغْرَقُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

[God replied], ‘Escape in the night with My servants, for you are sure to be pursued [23] Leave the sea behind you parted and their army will be drowned [24] (The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 23-24)

The True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* is looking after His friends and giving them the necessary protection. The command for Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was to leave with the Israelites at night, and Allah informed him of what Pharaoh and his people would do, and that they would follow them. He did not leave him to be surprised but instead gave him a preventive knowledge that would help and support him.

This is what gave him the courage to say: “...No!” they will not catch up with us and defeat us. We are being helped by Allah, who commanded me to go forth with His slaves. He has told me what my enemy would do and He would never forsake me’.

Therefore, every glimpse in this story indicates Allah’s Absolute Power which acts upon all things, and turns things into the opposite. When Allah commanded, ‘Leave the sea behind you parted...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 24), this command came after striking the sea with the staff, which came in another verse.

The glimpses that complement one another are spread over more than one place yet they all serve one idea, and give one structure to the story. In one place Allah says to him: ‘...Strike the sea with your staff!’...’ (*ash-Shu’ara*: 63) and in another He says: ‘Leave the sea behind you parted...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 24). The word *rahwan* ‘...parted...’ is a gerund that comes from *raha* and *yarhu*, similar to *’ada*, *ya’du* and *’adwan*. *’Ada* means to run past a place, and it is the opposite is *raha* which means to stay in a place.

When Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* struck the sea the water solidified and stood still in its place in the form of two great cliffs, with dry land in between. Musa (Moses) saw this dry land as a ready path, and so he crossed it to the other side.

It would be natural to think that by striking the sea another time this would restore the sea to its previous state and prevent Pharaoh and his army

from catching up with them, but Allah had another plan: ‘Leave the sea behind you parted...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 24), i.e. in its solid form

Moses’s (Musa’s) thinking was due to his human nature, but the True Lord commands out of His Wisdom, and there is no shame attached to Musa (Moses) in this because the One Who corrects him is his Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* and this is an immense honour for Musa (Moses).

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the one who related this correction to us to show that messengers can make mistakes in matters in which there is no text; and Allah corrects them. Likewise, Allah corrects him in a similar occasion and says: ‘Prophet, why do you prohibit what Allah has made lawful to you, in your desire to please your wives? Yet Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.’ (*at-Tahrim*: 1) His Lord reproached him gently when: ‘May Allah pardon you (O Prophet)! Why did you grant them permission?’ (*at-Tawba*: 43) Who is the one who informed us of this reproach? Indeed, it is Prophet Muhammad’s truthfulness in conveying from his Lord.

Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* corrected prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and said to him: ‘Leave the sea behind you parted...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 24). This is because Allah wants to destroy Pharaoh and his army with the very same thing that He used to save Musa (Moses). This is from Allah’s Absolute Power because Pharaoh will inevitably be deceived by the dry path that he will see and will try to cross it in pursuit of Musa (Moses).

Indeed, when Musa (Moses) had reached the other side of the sea, Pharaoh was in the middle of it, and that is when Allah commanded the sea to return to its normal, fluid state, and it drowned Pharaoh and his army ‘...and their army will be drowned.’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 24) Thus, with His Absolute Power, Allah saved and destroyed using the very same thing.

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* explains to us what blessings these people were in, and the punishment and suffering that eventually befell them:

كَمْ تَرَكُوا مِنْ جَنَّاتٍ وَعَيُْونٍ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَزُرُوعٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿٢٦﴾
وَنَعْمَ كَانُوا فِيهَا فَكَهِنَ ﴿٢٧﴾

Many a garden and spring they left behind [25]
many a cornfield and noble building [26]
many a thing in which they had delighted [27]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 25 - 27)

After Allah had drowned them, they left behind this life of ease. *Kam* (how) indicates an abundance of ‘many a garden...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 25) blooming, verdant gardens ‘...and springs...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 25), i.e. freshwater springs which flew through these gardens ‘...and noble buildings.’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 26) The word *maqam* (‘...buildings...’) with a *fatha* (a) over the *mim*, is a noun meaning the spot where we stand. The noun of the gerund *iqama* is *muqam* with a *damma* (u) over the *mim*, to indicate the place where someone resides. A *muqam* is not described as noble (*karim*) unless it provides means of rest and comfort to whoever resides in it. The *maqam* itself possesses nobility which means that it gathers all meanings of goodness for its owner when he stands and when he sits. As if goodness follows this person and obeys his commands which means he has followers, and these followers carry out his commands when he stands and when he sits.

When a man is sitting, or sleeping or reclining, what can make him stand up? Probably something occurs urging him to stand up. This thing would be one of two; either something good and that would make him happy, like a loved one or a friend returning after a long absence, or it would be something that saddens him or frightens him, and so he stands up because of it.

Likewise, the word *muqam*, with a *damma* (u) over the *mim* is found in the Quran and it means a place of residence in the verse: ‘It is an evil home, a foul resting place!’ (*al-Furqan*: 66), and the verse: ‘There they will stay, a happy home and resting place!’ (*al-Furqan*: 76)

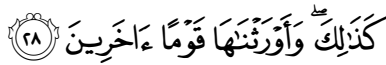
As for the statement: ‘...many a thing in which they had delighted!’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 27), the word *na`ma* (delighted) is also found with a *fatha* (a) above the *nun* two other times, like here, and it is found with a *kasra* (i) above the *nun*, as in ‘...Remember those blessings (*ni`ma*) of Mine with which I

graced you...’ (*al-Baqara*: 40), in 34 places, either on its own or associated with Allah. Most of them are in the form of *ni`mati* (My blessings), *ni`matuka* (Your blessings), or *ni`matuhu* (His blessings).

The difference between the two is that *ni`ma*, with a *kasra*, is that which one enjoys, but we notice that whatever is enjoyed is outside oneself. Thus, sometimes there can be a blessing (*ni`ma*) and there can be the ability to enjoy it. Other times, the blessing can be there, but the ability to enjoy is not. As for the word *na`ma*, it means that the *ni`ma* is there as well as the ability to enjoy it.

In the statement: ‘...many a thing in which they had delighted!’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 27), the word *fakih* (delighted!) is from *tafakkuh* (delight) and *taladhdhudh* (enjoyment) which is taken from *fakiha* (fruits) meaning luxury and comfort because food includes things that are basic and necessary for the sustenance of life, and other foods that are for pleasure such as the fruits eaten after a meal.

These things that are eaten for pleasure can be done without because they are not necessities, and the proof is that many people do not eat fruits and they are still alive. Therefore, they had luxuries and comforts in life that were in addition to their necessities



We gave these to another people to inherit [28]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 28)

‘Thus...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 28) means ‘like this’; Allah stripped them of these blessings and gave them to other people. Had they only been taken from them it would have been tolerable, but they were taken from them and given to other people, and this is worse.

The reason why envy is abhorred is the fact that the envier wishes for someone else to lose his blessings, even if they will not end up with him. He only cares for the blessings to depart from the person he envies, because he hates the blessings to be with that person, and likewise the blessings hate him and never end up with him.

The opposite of envy is *ghibta* - felicity, which is loving the blessing that someone else has and wishing something similar for yourself. When you love

a blessing, it loves you and it comes to you when you say: 'O Allah! Bless him with it and bless me with something similar.'

But, who are these other people who inherited the life of ease after Pharaoh's people? They are the Israelites, the people who were made to suffer, whose children they slaughtered and whose women they spared. Slaughtering on its own is humiliation and disgrace but what was done to the women after the men got slaughtered was even more atrocious. That is why, when the Arabs set out for war, they would bring their women with them so that they would not leave them behind for their enemies if they got defeated.

﴿٢٩﴾ فَمَا بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَاءُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَا كَانُوا مُنْظَرِينَ

**Neither heavens nor earth shed a tear for them,
nor were they given any time [29]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 29)**

This verse affirms that inanimate objects have feelings, and that they love and hate, they weep and rejoice. Therefore, feelings are initiated in all created things when needed, but in man they are a constant. You see a man, for example, loving his son, even if his son was foolish or mischievous. His love for him continues, and his feelings towards him may be more than his feelings towards a normal, proper child.

That is why the Bedouin ⁽¹⁾, when he was asked which of his children was most beloved to him, he said: 'The youngest until he grows up, the absent until he returns and the sick until he recovers.'⁽²⁾

As for animals, their feelings are according to the need. So, you see animals having feelings for their young ones and defending them, but once they grow up, they leave them as if they never knew them at all. The feelings they were given were just to cover the need for nurturing their young enough so they could lead their own lives.

(1) He is Ghilan ibn Salama (mentioned by Al-Asfahani in *Al-Aghani*), and he is Hudha ibn 'Ali Al-Hanafi. According to *Al-Maydani in Majma' Al-Amthal* and *Ibn 'Abd Rabbuh in Al-Iqd Al-Farid*.

(2) This statement is mentioned by Al-Asfahani in *Al-Aghani* (2/477), under the transmissions of Ghilan.

The same for inanimate objects! The True Lord *the Exalted* elevates them and gives them feelings, and it is from here that the sky and the earth do not shed any tears over these destroyed people because they went against Allah's way.

That is why Allah addresses inanimate objects and places them in the rank of those who possess inherent cognition, the enlightened people who understand and have intellect, and the proof is that Allah *the Exalted* gave the heavens, the earth and the mountains the ability to choose with regards to the matter of bearing the trust: 'We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, yet they refused to undertake it and were afraid of it...' (*al-Ahzab*: 72).

This proves that they have the ability to choose and that they can rationalize. Some said that the heavens and earth are subjugated and forced to worship. I say: No! Everything in existence, with the exception of Allah, has been allowed to choose, and amongst the creation are those that relinquished their ability to choose in favour of their Lord's choice, and relinquished their will in favour of their Creator's will. Then, there are those who chose to keep the ability to choose, and this is man.

We said that there is a difference between the time of assuming a responsibility and the time of actually carrying it out. You are always certain and confident at the time of assuming, but you cannot guarantee carrying out. Therefore, inanimate objects were more objective than man was in this matter because they chose from the beginning to be compelled by their Lord. As for man, he chose to be allowed to choose, and when it came to carrying out the trust some of us believed and some of us disbelieved; some of us obeyed and some of us disobeyed.

If you were to ask: 'In what language do the heavens and earth speak'? My answer would be: 'Their Creator *the Exalted* addresses them and they understand, since He is the one who knows their language'. That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* gives us examples of the speech of created things and their glorification of Allah. He says: '...We made the mountains and the birds celebrate Our praises with Dawud (David). We did all these things.' (*al-Anbiya*': 79) He also says: '...There is not a single thing that does not celebrate His praise, though you do not understand their praise...' (*al-Isra*': 44).

In the story of prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* the hoopoe said something that demonstrated his knowledge and impeccably amazing understanding of Allah's Oneness. Also, when the ant spoke, we saw that it had an understanding for the standards of truth and justice.

By Allah, we are astonished when we read this verse: 'Do you not realize [Prophet] that everything in the heavens and earth submits to Allah: the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, and the animals? So do many human beings, though for many others punishment is well deserved. Anyone disgraced by Allah will have no one to honour him: Allah does whatever He will.' (*al-Hajj*: 18)

All created beings glorify Allah, absolutely and without exception, except for man; the one and only creature that deviates from this order.

That is why we said that the other creatures, apart from man, were much wiser when they refused to be allowed to choose and relinquished their will in favour of their Lord's. Therefore, let man not be deluded! Let him know that the creatures around you have a role and a rank with Allah, and that they were created with understanding and feelings just the same as he was.

This matter is confirmed in an authentic Hadith by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who said about Uhud: {Uhud is a mountain that loves us, just as we love it.}⁽¹⁾

He also said, in another Hadith, that the mountain trembled as he and three of his Companions walked on it, and the Hadith goes as thus: 'Stand firm Uhud, for upon you are a Prophet, a Siddiq and two martyrs.'⁽²⁾ He also

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (1287), the Hadith of Abu Hamid As-Sa'adi, and likewise Muslim in his *Sahih* (2466) and Al-Bayhaqi in *Dala'il An-Nabuwwa* (2020). Its wording is that Abu Hamid said: 'We set out with Prophet Muhammad from the battle of Tabuk until we were looking at Medina, and he said: {This is Taba and this is Uhud, a mountain that loves us and we love it.}

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (2410,2299), Abu Dawud in his *Sunnan* (4032) and At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (2630), and he said that it is a sound Hadith (one authentic transmission and one good narration), that Prophet Muhammad climbed Uhud with Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman, and it trembled with them. So, he said: 'Stand firm Uhud, for upon you are a prophet, a Siddiq and two martyrs.' The Prophet is the messenger, the Siddiq is Abu Bakr and the two martyrs are 'Umar and 'Uthman.

said: 'By Allah, indeed I know a stone in Mecca that used to give me peace greetings even before the revelation.'⁽¹⁾

It is also affirmed in the Hadith that the earth weeps at the death of a believer and rejoices at the death of a disbeliever.⁽²⁾ The Arabs also have a saying that goes, 'The household became sick of him', i.e. it hated him.

This can only be because these inanimate objects have some form of understanding and rationalization, and they are in complete harmony with Allah's way, as they are obedient and glorifying. That is why they love those who are like them from amongst the human beings and hate those who deviate from Allah's way or reject His Oneness.

That is why, when 'Ali was asked: 'Do the sky and the earth weep?' He said: 'Yes. When a believer dies two places weep for him; a place on earth and a place in the sky. As for the place on earth, it is the place where he prostrated or prayed. As for the place in the sky, is it the place from where his deeds ascended.'⁽³⁾ Hence, there is a kind of companionship between the place and the one in it; between the place and the believer.

With this we understand: 'Neither heavens nor earth shed a tear for them....' (*ad-Dukhan*: 29) So, why would the sky weep over the destruction of Allah's enemy, Pharaoh, after he had challenged the True Lord *Glorified is He* and claimed that he was a deity besides Allah?

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (4222), Ahmad in his *Musnad* (19912, 19988) and At-Tabarani in *Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir* (2087, 1928, 1874) from the Hadith of Jabir ibn Samra.

(2) From Anas ibn Malik who said that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said: 'There is no believer except that he has two portals in the sky, a portal from which his sustenance comes and a portal through which his speech and actions enter. When he dies, they miss him and they weep over him.' Then he recited: 'and neither sky nor earth shed tears over them...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 29). Narrated by At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (2178) and he said: 'This Hadith is gharib (a Hadith that is absolutely unique in its narration or unique by having something added to its text or to its chain of narrations).

(3) Mentioned by As-Samarqandi in his *Quranic commentary Bahr Al-'Ulum* (4/123) from the statement of Ibn 'Abbas that he was asked: 'Do the sky and earth weep over anyone?' He said: 'Yes. When a believer dies his place on earth in which he used to remember Allah and pray weeps over him, and his portal in the sky through which his deeds would rise also weeps over him.' Mentioned by As-Suyuti in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* (*ad-Dukhan*) from a number of chains coming from a number of Companions

The statement: ‘...nor were they given any time...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 29) means they were not delayed beyond the appointed time, which Allah had decreed for their end, because when the term appointed by Allah comes, it can never be put back.

وَلَقَدْ بَجَّيْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ ﴿٣٠﴾
مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَلِيًّا مِّنَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

**We saved the Children of Israel from their
degrading suffering [30] at the hands of Pharaoh:
he was a tyrant who exceeded all bounds [31]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 30-31)**

In the statement: ‘...from their degrading suffering’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 31), suffering (*`adhab*) is to cause physical pain, and this could be with fire or something else such as cutting body part or skin, for example. But there is another form of non-physical suffering, like humiliation and disgrace, but it could be added to physical suffering. Some people can tolerate physical suffering, but they cannot bear to be humiliated with a word, and maybe it is even worse for them than physical suffering.

The Israelites were suffering from the slaughtering of their children and keeping their women alive. Women are a weak spot for men, and one’s honour must be preserved. That is why transgressing against a man’s woman is the greatest humiliation for him.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* was Incessantly Merciful with the Israelites and He saved them from the shameful suffering ‘...at the hands of Pharaoh...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 31). He ‘...was a tyrant who exceeded all bounds...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 31), i.e. in his transgression against the people, ‘...exceeded all bounds...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 31), meaning that he wasted their lives.

The one who exceeds limits (*musrif*) is the one who transgresses the bounds that Allah has set and goes beyond them; Pharaoh’s arrogance was too extreme that he said to them: ‘I am your Lord All-Highest!’, and he deceived and deluded his people.

We stated previously that there is a difference between someone being misguided in himself and someone being misguided and misguiding others. Pharaoh was misguided and he misguided an entire nation and enslaved them. The one who said ⁽¹⁾: ‘When did you enslave the people although they were born free?’ was indeed truthful.

وَلَقَدْ اخْتَرْنَاهُمْ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عَلَىٰ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

**We chose them knowingly above others [32]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 32)**

The speech here is about the Israelites, and they cling to this verse and use it to claim that they are Allah’s chosen people. They say to us: ‘Indeed Allah is the One Who created you and sent you a messenger and it is He Who chose us over all other people’.

This is a false claim because ‘...others’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 32) in this verse indicates the people contemporary to that time, such as Pharaoh’s people and others. These people were, by and large, idolaters, so Allah chose the Israelites because they believed in Allah and at that time they were the best of Allah’s entire creation.

However, they wanted to apply this verse to all of mankind and to all peoples at all times and places, and this is not possible. The proof is that when they contravened Allah’s way, He dispersed them throughout the earth in different communities and scattered them everywhere as a form of punishment.

This has gone to such an extent that in every city, you find a ghetto named after them, called ‘the Jewish Ghetto’, and you can see them gathering together and sticking to themselves and not mixing or integrating with the society around them.

(1) *This statement is attributed to `Umar ibn Al-Khattab, and mentioned by the author of Al-Wilaya `Ala Al-Buldan. A son of `Amr ibn Al-`As beat a Coptic boy and relied on his father’s authority to do so. The Commander of the Believers wrote to him recalling him with his son and the Coptic boy. He then gave a whip to the Egyptian boy and commanded him to take his revenge from Ibn Al-`As’s son. Then he turned to them and said this above statement.*

The Quran even expressed this concept in the saying: 'We dispersed them over the earth in separate communities...' (*al-A'raf*: 168). Thus, each group from amongst them, in its own place, represents an independent community because they do not integrate with other communities.

Their claim is debunked in the verse: 'And then your Lord declared that, until the Day of Resurrection, He would send people against them to inflict terrible suffering on them. Your Lord is swift in punishment...' (*al-A'raf*: 167). This is what actually happens because from time to time Allah brings people against them who inflict terrible suffering on them.

Then, Allah says:

وَأَيْنَهُمْ مِّنَ الْآيَاتِ مَا فِيهِ بَلَاءٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

We gave them revelations in which there was a clear test [33] (The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 33)

In His statement: 'We gave them revelations in which there was a clear test.' (*ad-Dukhan*: 33), the revelations are the miracles that accompanied prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and with these signs Allah saved them from drowning and He saved them from Pharaoh's people.

It is amazing that just after Allah had saved them from drowning and from Pharaoh, and just after they had gotten out safely, they saw some people worshipping their idols and they said to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*: '...O Musa (Moses), set up for us a deity just as they have deities!...' (*al-A'raf*: 138) They associated partners with Allah, while their feet were still wet from crossing the sea!

While they were in the desert, Allah was generous with them, and He sent down to them manna and quails which are the best of foods and the most delicious to eat. This was given to them without having to toil or expend effort. However, because of their materialistic nature, they objected to the manna and quails.

They said to Musa (Moses): '...Musa (Moses), we cannot bear to eat only one kind of food, so pray to your Lord to bring out for us some of the earth's produce, its herbs and cucumbers, its garlic, lentils, and onions. He said,

“Would you exchange better for worse?”...’ (*al-Baqara*: 61) They wanted something material which they can fetch, using their hands, from a source known to them. Indeed, they had reached such a degree of materialism that they told Musa (Moses): ‘...Make us see Allah face to face...’ (*an-Nisa*: 153).

Some have even said that it is Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* who encouraged them to this when he said: ‘...O my Sustainer! Show Yourself to me so that I might behold You!...’ (*al-A‘raf*: 143)

The word: ‘...a test’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 33) means a trial in order to know how you will react after seeing the signs or after seeing the blessings. We said before that tests are not blameworthy or praiseworthy in and of themselves, but rather according to their results and outcomes.

إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ لَيَقُولُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ إِنَّ هِيَ إِلَّا مَوْتُنَا الْأُولَىٰ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُنشَرِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

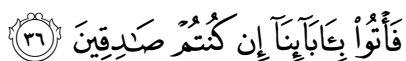
**These people here assert [34] There is nothing beyond
our one death: we will not be resurrected [35]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 34-35)**

The indication in ‘These people here assert...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 34) could mean the Israelites because if we looked in the Torah or the Talmud we would find no mention of the Last Day, even though it is one of the tenets of faith. Hence, they do not believe in this day.

The issue with them is as the Quran has related of their speech: ‘...The fire will most certainly not touch us for more than a limited number of days...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 24) meaning that the fire will be put out for them and this will be the end of the matter. In another verse, they said: ‘...We are Allah’s children and His beloved ones...’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 18).

‘These people’ could also mean those who deny the resurrection in a general sense, whether they are the Israelites or others. When saying: ‘There is nothing beyond our first death...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 35), they mean by the first death the state of non-existence that they were in before they were created. They consider non-existence to be a state of death. Then Allah created Adam and from him came the rest of creation.

So, when Allah says: ‘...seeing that you were lifeless and He gave you the life...’ (*al-Baqara*: 28), they argue that this is the only death that will be followed by life, and that there is no other death followed by a resurrection or a reckoning. ‘...we will not be resurrected.’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 35), i.e. we will not be resurrected after death.



**Bring back our forefathers, if what you say
is true [36] (The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 36)**

We said before, that faith is founded on ‘unseen’ signs. Thus, you believe in Allah’s Existence and in paradise and the fire without seeing them. This is the essence of faith. As for signs that can be seen, there is no faith with regards to them. You do not say: ‘I believe that the sun is up’. However, these people because of the materialism that holds control over them, want an unseen sign that can be seen. Thus, they say: ‘Bring back our forefathers, if what you say is true.’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 36)

They only believe in concrete things, and that is why they want their ancestors to be brought back from the dead so that they can believe that resurrection is true. We say to them: ‘If you want that, then you have the books of history and the divine messages that have been related to you. You have something similar to what you want in the story of 'Uzair (Ezra) *peace be upon him*:

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Or [are you, O man, of the same mind] as he who passed by a town⁽¹⁾ deserted by its people, with its roofs caved in, [and] said, “How could Allah bring all this back to life after its death?” Thereupon Allah caused him to be dead for a hundred years; after which He brought him back to life [and] said: “How long have you tarried?” He answered: “I have tarried a day, or part of a day.” Allah said: “Nay! You have tarried a hundred

(1) *Ibn Kathir mentioned in his Tafsir (1/214) that the established opinion is that the town is Jerusalem. However, scholars differed as to he who passed by it. 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb Allah be pleased with him said that it was Ezra, which is the generally accepted opinion. He was also said to have been Armiya ibn Halqiya, which is the opinion of Wahb ibn Munabbih. Hazqil ibn Bawar was also thought to be the man intended. Nonetheless, Mujahid ibn Jabr upheld that he was a man from the children of Israel (without specification).*

years; then look at your food and drink – untouched is it by the passing of years – and look at your ass; and [We did all this so] that We might make you a symbol unto men. And look at the bones – how We put them together and then clothe them with flesh!” And when [all this] became clear to him, he said: “I know [now] that Allah has the power over all things!”” (*al-Baqara*: 259)

The same is found in the story of the People of the Cave. Brought back to life after three hundred and nine years, they said upon awakening from sleep or death, as Allah *Glorified is He* states: ‘...We have spent there a day, or part of a day...’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 113). Being the normal sleep duration, they thought it to be the period they remained.

Such incidents as well as others occurred in the eras of the previous Prophets, whom they knew and believed in. Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Are you not aware of those who left their homelands in their thousands for fear of death – whereupon Allah said unto them, “Die,” and later brought them back to life? ...’ (*al-Baqara*: 243)

Those people, whom Allah brought back to life after death, lived only to the extent that proved their miracle and then died. Therefore, the disbelievers have no plea in requesting their ancestors to be brought back to life, for Allah *Glorified is He* brought the dead back to life, as said by the messengers. All the same, they did not believe and even had Allah brought their ancestors back to life, they would not have believed.

Allah *Glorified is He* states:

أَهُمْ خَيْرٌ أَمْ قَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

**Are they better than the people of Tubba’ and
those who flourished before them? We destroyed
them all – they were guilty[37]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 37)**

Allah *Glorified is He* draws a comparison between these people and the nations before them who denied the truth as they did. Allah tells them that they are not the first people to disbelieve and thereby not evading the punishment that befell those who denied before them.

'They' in the verse: 'Are they better...' (*ad-Dukhan: 37*) refers to the children of Israel, whereas '...the people of *Tubba'*...' (*ad-Dukhan: 37*) allude to *Tubba' Al-Himayri* who was one of the kings of Yemen. In the past, Yemen was called 'The Green Land' or 'Joyous Yemen' because of its abundance of treasures.

Tubba', who was a righteous man, was opposed and denied by his people, so Allah seized them with a Seizure of the All-Mighty, All-Capable, after destroying the dam that was supplying them with water for irrigation. With the destruction of the dam, their entire lives were destroyed.

This story reminds me of the days when I was in Algeria. The people of Algeria built a dam in order to reserve rainwater and they called it *Sadd Maarib* (Marib Dam). On the inauguration of the dam, when I was in the company of the Algerian President, someone stood up to give a speech. He said, 'Now, the dam has been built and thus you can irrigate your land and cultivation, whether it rains or not.'

This statement caught my attention as I found it in contradiction, not only to religion but also to logic and reason. I said to the Foreign Minister of the host state, 'Ask the speaker what the dam will reserve if it does not rain?'

In the Quranic verse: '...they were guilty' (*ad-Dukhan: 27*), the word *mujrim* (guilty) is not used unless the person dubbed as such has went too far in disobedience and committing sins. The word *mujrim* signifies someone who commits an abominable crime. In the verse under discussion, the general meaning is given: '...and those who flourished before them? We destroyed them all...' (*ad-Dukhan: 37*).

In another verse, the nature of the destruction is explained in detail. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'For every one of them did We punish for his sin: and so, upon some of them⁽¹⁾ We let loose a deadly storm; and some of them were

(1) They were destroyed by four different types of punishment:

The sending of *al-hasib* which is a severe storm wind that carries the pebbles of the earth throwing them upon the disbelievers and uprooting them... Then, it inverted them upon their heads. Such was the punishment of the people of 'Ad.

The blast, i.e. to be overtaken by a cry, which is a scream that stifles their sounds and movements, and that was the punishment of the people of Thamud, the killers of Prophet Saleh's (Shelah's) she-camel.

overtaken by a [sudden] blast; and some of them We caused to be swallowed by the earth; and some of them We caused to drown...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40).

Further, in the chapter of *al-Fajr*, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Are you not aware of how your Lord has dealt with [the tribe of] Ad, [the people of] Iram the many-pillared, the like of whom has never been reared in all the land? And with [the tribe of] Thamud, who hollowed out rocks in the valley? And with Pharaoh of the [many] tent-poles?' (*al-Fajr*: 6-10)

These nations had civilizations which they could not preserve or defend against coming to an end such that it is as if they never existed. Allah *Glorified is He* seized the disbelievers of the earlier nations with a seizure of the All-Mighty, All-Capable because previous messengers were not asked to fight, but only to convey Allah's Message.

It was Allah *Glorified is He* Who took charge of disciplining the deniers and exacting revenge on them. Only Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was permitted to fight, because he was entrusted with leading humanity under his guidance, as revealed to him from Allah *Glorified is He*. Therefore, he is not to be succeeded by messengers, which stands as proof of bearing witness to the goodness of his community that remains until the Day of Judgment.

Allah *Glorified is He* states:

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَعِبٍ
مَا خَلَقْنَاهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

**We were not playing a pointless game when We
created the heavens and earth and everything in
between [38] We created them for a true purpose,
but most people do not comprehend [39]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 38-39)**

To turn our attention towards a universal issue, incorporating time, in the past and in the present, Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the firmness of the creation of

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- = Being swallowed by the earth and this is what happened to Qarun, who transgressed and oppressed, so Allah caused the earth to swallow him.
Drowning which befell Pharaoh along with his minister, Haman, and their soldiers. They were all drowned in one morning.

the heavens and the earth. Ever since they were created, they have been following a perfectly firm system that does not fall behind, change, or alter.

Being created with truth and in truth is attested to by this firmness, as truth is firm whereas falsehood changes. For instance, a false witness standing before a judge inevitably gives conflicting statements which can be exposed by the examining magistrate who keeps asking and investigating him to find out his false statements that he is trying to present as truth.

His statements are contradictory, being merely some falsehood based on his own imagination. However, the one who bears witness and speaks the truth does not change his mind as long as he sticks to it. This is because truth is firm and real, thereby leaving no room for contradiction.

Examining magistrates have their ways and methods to expose lies and arrive at the truth. Hence, the saying goes, 'a liar should have a good memory'. However, it is inevitable that at some point your memory will let you down so that truth prevails over falsehood.

I remember we had in Dakados⁽¹⁾ a braggart farmer. Once, on our way back from Mit Ghamr, the man was telling some of his stories. He said, 'such and such incident happened on the night of the *Eid Al-Fitr* (After-Ramadan holiday) when the moon was bright.' I wondered how the moon could be bright in such night. It is surely true what the common proverb provides, (a lie has no legs, i.e. one lie leads to another).

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'We were not playing a pointless game when We created the heavens and earth and everything in between' (*ad-Dukhan*: 38). It is clear, then, that Allah *Glorified is He* created them decisively for a purpose, not in play, and with truth not falsehood. In the following verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'We created them for a true purpose...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 39). This firmness is proof of the precision, providence, meticulousness, perfect engineering, and laws of the creation, which have never conflicted with each other since they were created and never will until the Last Day.

(1) The village of Dakados is in *Mit Ghamr*, Daqahlia Governorate, Egypt. The house and mausoleum of Mohammed Mutawalli Ash-Sha'rawi are established there. (Wikipedia Arabic)

Contemplate, for example, on the rising and setting, movement and speed of the sun in relation to the earth. Reflect on the moon and its eclipse. All these signs occur with the utmost precision and with measures that never fall behind or conflict. A manmade device cannot keep working with such precision constantly.

Allah *Glorified is He* the One, created the heavens and the earth with an exact harmonious system for a purpose, which is one and the same since the creation of Adam *peace be upon him* until the end of the world.

The word *haqq* (truth), referred to in the verse as: ‘...for a purpose...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 39) denotes something firm that does not change. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And the skies has He raised high, and has devised [for all things] a measure so that you [too, O people,] might never transgress the measure [of what is right]: weigh, therefore, [your deeds] with equity, and cut not the measure short!’ (*ar-Rahman*: 7-9)

This verse contains a subtle indication, as if Allah *Glorified is He* were to say: ‘Look at the sky, the stars and celestial bodies that it contains. Have you seen any conflict or imbalance therein?’ The answer is ‘never’ because they were created for a purpose and with measure and precision. Similarly, for the affairs of your life to be straight and upright, then the measure of truth should be adopted to the core. Only then will you find no conflict or contradiction in society.

Firm, truth is permanent and sublime. Thus, the saying goes, ‘Truth glitters while falsehood stutters’. Truth is never obliterated, even if falsehood has the upper hand temporarily, as Allah *Glorified is He* allows falsehood to prevail at some point in order that people hold firm to and feel the importance of truth. It is as if falsehood itself is a soldier of truth and disbelief is a soldier of faith. Were it not for the onslaught and severity of falsehood, people would have never known the bliss of truth. Hence, when faith came, no one rushed to embrace it except for those who were suffering the most from disbelief.

The Quranic verse: ‘...but most people do not comprehend.’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 39) indicates that most people do not understand these realities because they turn away from Allah’s signs in the universe, and from contemplation, as Allah says: ‘But [then] – how many a sign is there in the heavens and on

earth which they pass by [unthinkingly], and on which they turn their backs!’ (Yusuf: 105)

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ مِيقَتُهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ يَوْمَ لَا يُغْنِي مَوْلَى عَنْ مَوْلَى شَيْئًا
وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ اللَّهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٤٢﴾

The Day of Decision is the time appointed for all [40]

a Day when no friend can take another's place [41]

No one will receive any help except for those to whom

God shows mercy: He is the Mighty, the Merciful Lord [42]

(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 40 - 42)

As they used to turn away from Allah's signs in the worldly life, they will be presented before Him on the Day of Judgment: 'Verily, the Day of Distinction [between the true and the false] is the term appointed for all of them.' (*ad-Dukhan*: 40) The Day of Resurrection is their appointed time in which Allah will gather all of them together; the follower and the followed, the believer and the disbeliever, the obedient and the disobedient, the deniers and the believers in the Messengers.

All will be gathered on: 'the Day when no friend shall be of the least avail...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 41). A friend will be of no benefit '...to his friend...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 41), and no relative will defend his relative.

In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* states: 'On that Day, friends will be foes unto one another – [all] save the righteous.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 67) Blood and friendship ties will be preserved among the righteous only. Nonetheless, friends for the sake of vanities and interests of the worldly life will be enemies on the Day of Resurrection. Each one of them will blame the other for not advising or warning him against falling into sins and disobedience.

The Quranic verse: '...No one will receive any help' (*ad-Dukhan*: 41) suggests that they will find no one to help them besides Allah: 'except for those to whom Allah shows mercy...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 41). The mercy bestowed upon those people encompasses mercy in the worldly life in the first place by saving them from disbelief and leading them to faith and belief in Prophet

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It is of Allah's Mercy that they follow His Guidance and His straight path until they meet with Him. This mercy paves the way for the greatest mercy on the Day of Resurrection.

The word *mawla* (friend) extends to include children, relatives and friends, and even slaves and servants. It can also include one's followers and subordinates. The Quranic verse: '...no friend can take another's place...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 41) indicates that one will not protect another from harm or bear his burdens because each person will be preoccupied with himself and his own burden. This is the case with humanity. The same goes for the idols and anything worshipped besides Allah, which will never defend their worshippers.

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says about Pharaoh: '[And so] he shall go before his people on the Day of Resurrection...' (*Hud*: 98), i.e. he will precede his people to the fire.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

إِنَّ شَجَرَتَ الزَّقُّومِ ۖ طَعَامُ الْأَثِيمِ ۖ
كَالْمُهْلِ يَغْلِي فِي الْبُطُونِ ۖ كَغَلْيِ الْحَمِيمِ ۖ

**The tree of *Zaqqum* [43] will be food for the
sinners [44] [hot] as molten metal, it boils in their
bellies [45] like seething water [46]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 43 - 46)**

In these verses, Allah *Glorified is He* gives us an idea about the food of the inmates of the fire, from which we seek refuge in Allah. In another verse, He depicts their drink in it because food and drink are the essentials of life. Their food is awful fruit from the *Zaqqum* tree, which is a small tree with a putrid smell and a bitter taste. Regarding its shape, Allah *Glorified is He* states in another verse: 'It is fruit [as repulsive] as the heads of devils.' (*as-Saffat*: 65) This is a simile precisely conveying how repulsive and ugly it is to eat or even at which to look.

Objecting to this simile, some orientalists contend that what is unknown cannot be compared to that which is also unknown, given that no one has seen the heads of the devils. The purpose of a simile, they argue, is to compare

something unknown to something known for the sake of clarification. Their argument is based on lack of knowledge regarding the inimitability of the Quran and its way of rendering meaning. If we were to hold a competition between all the caricature artists in the world, asking them to draw a picture of the Devil, each one of them would portray him according to how ugly he imagines him to be. In this way, we will be left with numerous images, all of which are ugly despite being different from one another. Granted, ugliness has various types; something may be repulsive for some people but not as such for others. For instance, the standards of beauty are relative among people; some people see beauty in thin lips while others see it in thick lips.

As such, the standards of ugliness differ in the minds of people and the image that scares one person might not scare another. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* uses this simile to depict the ugliness and repulsiveness of its fruit in such a way as encompasses all aspects thereof according to every one's mind.

Accordingly, vagueness here is better because it allows for imaging ugliness in every possible way and thus we maintain that vagueness here is the utmost clarification and the essence of explanation. Therefore, it is a loathsome tree in its shape, taste and smell. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* further describes its taste as being: '[hot] as molten metal, it boils in their bellies.' (*ad-Dukhan*: 45) The Arabic word *al-muhl* (molten metal) signifies the melted metal that reaches the maximum temperature, or it may refer to boiling oil.

For example, the chef cooking *falafil* boils the oil for long periods until it turns into a black, toxic substance. This is what they call *al-muhl* if it comes from soft sources. It may also come from hard sources such as metals, for example: gold, iron and copper.

The meaning of: '...it boils in their bellies' (*ad-Dukhan*: 45) is that the temperature of the drink does not decrease after consuming it. For example, upon drinking hot tea one feels a burning sensation in his mouth. However, when it reaches the stomach, the temperature decreases. Food taken from the *zaqqum* tree, on the other hand, keeps boiling even after being settled in the bellies: 'like seething water.' (*ad-Dukhan*: 46) Such food is as hot and boiling as water that has reached its maximum temperature.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

خُذُوهُ فَاعْتِلُوهُ إِلَى سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٤٧﴾ ثُمَّ صُبُّوا فَوْقَ رَأْسِهِ مِنْ عَذَابِ
الْحَمِيمِ ﴿٤٨﴾ ذُقْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْكَرِيمِ ﴿٤٩﴾

Take him! Thrust him into the depths of Hell! [47]

Pour scalding water over his head as punishment! [48]

Taste this, you powerful, respected man! [49]

(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 47-49)

Contemplating the imperative verb: ‘Take him...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 47-49) given by Allah *Glorified is He* one finds it scaring and dreadful. Surely, were it to be said by a police officer to a criminal, he would be terrified. How fearsome should it be, then, when said by Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘...Thrust him...!’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 47) That is to say, haul him severely and harshly, without mercy or clemency, but to where? ‘...into the depths of Hell!’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 47) Allah *Glorified is He* does not merely say ‘to *jahim*’ (hell), but He says instead ‘into the depths of Hell’. Were that inhabitant of fire to be at its edges, he could possibly have hope of getting out, or maybe a breeze would come and mitigate his suffering. Rather, he is in the middle, with the fire all around him from every direction, surrounding him.

Further, another punishment is to be inflicted on him: ‘Pour scalding water over his head as a punishment!’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 48) Thus, he suffers from boiling substances in his abdomen and over his head, after which he is to experience mental suffering, derision, and mockery.

‘Taste this, you powerful, respected man!’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 49) Tasting, involving all parts of the body, is to be inflicted on him. ‘...you powerful respected man!’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 49), i.e., you were powerful and respected in the worldly life and thought the same would be the case in the Hereafter. The same goes for the one who said, as Allah *Glorified is He* states: ‘...But even if [it should come, and] I am brought before my Lord, I will surely find something even better than this as [my last] resort!’ (*al-Kahf*: 36) His description, as given in the Quran: ‘...powerful, respected man’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 49) is intended for mocking and deriding him.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

إِنَّ هَذَا مَا كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَمْتَرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

**This is what you doubted [50]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 50)**

The referent of the Quranic phrase: ‘This is...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 50) is the suffering that is befalling them. The phrase: ‘...what you doubted’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 50) indicates that what the disbelievers used to doubt and reject is now an actual reality.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the opposite category, stating:

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي مَقَامٍ أَمِينٍ ﴿٥١﴾ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿٥٢﴾ يَلْبَسُونَ مِنْ سُندُسٍ
وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ كَذَلِكَ وَزَوَّجْنَاهُمْ بِحُورٍ عِينٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

**But those mindful of God will be in a safe place [51]
amid Gardens and springs [52] clothed in silk and
fine brocade, facing one another [53] so it will be. We
shall wed them to maidens with large, dark eyes [54]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 51-54)**

Using complete opposites for the purpose of clarification is one of the Quranic linguistic styles, by way of which the meaning becomes clearer. Employing this linguistic style, the Arab poet puts it:

The face is like the white dawn

While the hair is like the black night

Two opposites, when brought together properly

One opposite manifests the beauty of the other

Similarly, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘[in the life to come] the truly virtuous will indeed be in bliss, whereas, the wicked will indeed be in a blazing fire.’ (*al-Infitar*: 13-14) It is for one to make the comparison and choose. For this reason, after telling us about the final outcome of the criminals and the various kinds of punishment prepared for them, Allah mentions the final outcome of the righteous and the life of bliss prepared for them.

In the Quranic verse: ‘But those mindful of Allah will be in a safe place’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 51), the pious and righteous person is the one who places a protective barrier *between himself and* Allah’s Attributes of Majesty. His Attributes of Majesty include: *Al-Qahhar* (The All-Dominant), *Al-Jabbar* (The All-Compeller), *Al-Muntaqim* (The Avenger), and *Dhul-Batsh Ash-Shadid* (The One Who is severe in Punishment). Thus, believers should place a protective barrier between themselves and Allah’s Attributes of Majesty, the consequences of which cannot be faced by them.

Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* states: ‘O you who believe! Remain conscious of Allah...’ (*al-Baqara*: 278). In another verse, Allah says, ‘...then be conscious of the fire whose fuel is human beings and stones which awaits all who deny the truth!’ (*al-Baqara*: 24) Fire is one of the means for implementing the implications of Allah’s Attributes of Dominance and Majesty, and thus both verses convey the same meaning.

Regarding the Quranic verse: ‘...in a safe place’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 51), the word *maqam* (place) denotes a place of residence or home in which one lives. Further, it has many parts, in which to stay, sleep, or practise other activities. However, one of the most important essentials of a home is security for oneself and one’s property.

Accordingly, when setting up a residential area, the first thing to think of is providing security to its residents. This entails being located far from the pastures of beasts and predatory animals. In addition, it has to be secure from thieves and treacherous people who watch over one trying to disturb his peace.

A safe place is the one wherein one feels secure from everything. Therefore, specific security is given precedence to general security. This is clear in the Quranic verse depicting Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* as supplicating to Allah: ‘...O my Lord! Make this a land secure...’ (*al-Baqara*: 126), i.e. generally secure, as is a prerequisite for any land.

When given what he asked for, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* supplicated for specific security saying, as stated in the Quran: ‘...O my Lord! Make this land secure...’ (*Ibrahim*: 35). Moreover, Allah *Glorified is He* granted him more superior security which is the sanctity of the Sacred House:

‘...and whoever enters it finds security...’ (*Al-‘Imran: 97*) such that if a man meets his father’s killer therein he does not confront him because of the sanctity of the place.

When the incident of shooting and scaring the secured occurred in the Sacred House, some atheists seized this opportunity to cast doubt on the Quranic verse: ‘...and whoever enters it finds security...’ (*Al-‘Imran: 97*) deeming what happened as contradictory to the verse.

To better understand this issue, we should distinguish between the various styles of rendering in the Quran. The Quranic verse: ‘...and whoever enters it finds security...’ (*Al-‘Imran: 97*) does not intend to inform that whoever enters it is secure. Rather, Allah orders the believers, in the verse, to grant security to whoever enters it. Thus, it is a legislative command that can be obeyed by granting security to whoever enters it or disobeyed by frightening those entering it.

The verse contains a directive, not an informative sentence, which can be true or false, unlike a directive sentence, which can be neither true nor false.

For example, Allah *Glorified is He* states: ‘[In the nature of things,] corrupt women are for corrupt men, and corrupt men, for corrupt women – just as good women are for good men, and good men, for good women...’ (*an-Nur: 26*). Some people understand this verse to be informing that corrupt women are inevitably married to corrupt men. Looking at the reality of society, they come to have doubts on the veracity of the verse.

However, the meaning is rather legislative; give corrupt women to corrupt men, and give good women to good men. This is a legislative command that may be obeyed by some and disobeyed by others.

To follow Allah’s Commands is wise and sound in that compatibility between the couples and balance of the marital life are established. A good man marrying a corrupt woman would have his life spoiled by conflict and disagreement, or may rebuke and humiliate his wife for her past evil deeds. As for a corrupt man taking a corrupt woman in marriage, there will be agreement. If he blamed her for previous misdeeds, she would do the same.

On that account, Allah *Glorified is He* imposed certain universal matters that never change and are never contradicted by the reality of life. He also imposed legislative issues and left them for the choice of the legally responsible person. Thus, this verse and similar others do not represent universal but rather legislative matters. Allah *Glorified is He* orders those who believe in His legislative commands to observe them.

In the Quranic verse: ‘amid Gardens and springs’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 52), the word *jannat* (Gardens) signifies gardens and orchards, which are deemed by the Arabs as a beautiful gift and a great blessing. Even though security is a necessity, gardens and springs show luxury and an abundance of blessings.

Such gardens have springs, as stated in the verse: ‘...and springs’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 52), being indispensable for watering the plants and nourishing the fruits. After granting them security and luxuries of life, Allah *Glorified is He* then offers them beautiful clothing: ‘wearing [garments] of silk and brocade, facing one another’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 53).

The Arabic word *sundus* (silk) denotes fine silk, while the word *istabraq* (brocade) signifies thick, rough silk. This clothing indicates luxury, comfort, and bliss, because necessary clothes are those which cover one’s body, whereas luxurious clothes are embellished with feathers and particularly ostrich feathers. Hence is the saying, ‘a feathered man’, i.e. one who leads a luxurious life.

Allah *Glorified is He* states: ‘O Children of Adam! Indeed, We have bestowed upon you from on high [the knowledge of making] garments to cover your nakedness, and as adornment (*risha*): but the garment of righteousness is the best of all...’ (*al-A‘raf*: 26).

In this way, there are three kinds of clothes: necessary clothes that screen one’s nakedness, luxurious and embellished clothes, and the clothes of righteousness, the last of which is the best and most excellent. This is because the full benefit driven from clothes is covering one’s body and showing elegance in the worldly life. This is temporal enjoyment, extending only to the span of one’s life. A baby may die immediately after birth and thereby getting no share of such enjoyment nor having naked parts to cover.

On the other hand, the clothes of righteousness represent embellishment in the worldly life and salvation in the Hereafter, the everlasting and eternal

abode. Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...but the garment of righteousness is the best of all...' (*al-A'raf*: 26).

After the punishment prepared for the disbelievers is expounded, Allah *Glorified is He* as can be observed mentions the reward prepared for those who believe in Him and His messengers. Allah *Glorified is He* appointed the Day of Resurrection to judge between them: 'Verily, the Day of Distinction [between the true and the false] is the term appointed for all of them' (*ad-Dukhan*: 40).

Distinction is to be made between two things that are united in one matter and different in another. Thus, both the believers and disbelievers are the same in regard to existence, the conferment of Lordship and Allah's blessings in the worldly life, for Allah *Glorified is He* provides the essentials of life such as water, air, and food, to everyone.

Thus, they are equal in this regard because Allah *Glorified is He* is the Lord and the Creator of all of them. He is the One Who brought them into existence, so it is inevitable that He guarantees for them the necessities of life. However, these essentials are of varying degrees. For instance, when referring to clothes, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'O Children of Adam...' (*al-A'raf*: 26), instead of mentioning the believers in particular because it is a gift of Lordship.

Then, the verse goes on: '...Indeed, We have bestowed upon you from on high [the knowledge of making] garments to cover your nakedness...' (*al-A'raf*: 26). This verse indicates that they are both entitled to the necessary clothes that conceal their nakedness and the luxurious clothes of beauty and ornament. Such are of the enjoyments of the life of this world, whereas to the clothes of righteousness preference is given, being the clothes of the people of faith.

Furthermore, even though we are all made equal with regards to Divine conferment, being all His slaves, on the Day of Judgement everyone will get what he deserves. It is all different in the Hereafter. The disbelievers will have their food from the *zaqqum* tree which boils in their bellies like seething water, while the righteous will be in gardens and springs in a safe place.

The words *sundus* and *istabraq* are of Persian origin that were later introduced into Arabic, and thereby used in the Quran as Arabic words, due to common usage by the Arabs. In turn, the orientalists raised objections against

these words and other similar ones, such as the word *qistas* (balance) even though there is nothing wrong with a language using terms from another language.

Granted, these words were introduced into Arabic, used, and understood by Arabic speakers, and then what is wrong with using them as Arabic words? Nowadays, for example, we use the word 'bank', which is not Arabic, and may even find it smoother and easier than the Arabic word *masraf*.

The Quranic verse: '...facing one another' (*ad-Dukhan*: 53) depicts the people of paradise and their residence therein. The phrase 'facing one another' indicates intimacy, as faces look at each other continuously and are close to one another. The opposite is *mutadabira* (to face in opposite directions) which only exists in case of dispute. The phrase: '...facing one another' (*ad-Dukhan*: 53) suggests mutual intimacy, love and harmony between the dwellers of paradise.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'So it will be...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 54) which indicates that they will enjoy these blessings and even more: '...We shall wed them to maidens with large, dark eyes.' (*ad-Dukhan*: 54) The verb *zawwaja* (wed) is transitive and collocates with the preposition *ba* (with). Thus, when one says, 'I married such-and-such woman (to) him (*zawwajtuhu*)', it means I gave her to him as a wife. This refers to the legal marriage.

However, when one says, 'I paired him with so-and-so', it signifies adding another similar pair, which is not necessary a female. Thus, in the Quranic verse: '...We shall wed them to maidens with large, dark eyes' (*ad-Dukhan*: 54), the verb *zawwaja* is collocates with the letter *ba*.

This linguistic style implies that it is not the issue of marriage which is intended, but affability with the beauty of the maidens, representing the peak of pleasure. Having intimacy is not necessarily involved⁽¹⁾ because we will be resurrected as a new creation in the Hereafter, different from how we used to look in the worldly life, and the proof is that in paradise one eats but never defecates.

(1) This issue refutes the argument of those who challenge Islam contending that paradise of the Muslims is cantered around sexual intercourse while being devoid of sublime or lofty spirituality. Thus, the statement of Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawi *Allah rest his soul* decisively clarifies the matter to be one of intimacy and companionship. The preposition *ba* indicates companionship and close union, and not sexual intercourse. [*'Adil Abu Al-Ma'ati*]

On this basis, the intended meaning of the verse is pairing between couples, regardless of the gender because the pleasure here is that of looking, conversing and intimacy, but with values that are different from what we know now.

In the Quranic verse: ‘...to maidens with large, dark eyes’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 54), the word *hur* (maidens) is the plural of *huraa*, and it refers to the women of paradise. *Al-Hawar* is an attribute of the eye when its white part is extremely white and its black part is extremely black. The word *in* (large eyed), the plural of *ainaa*’ denotes wide beautiful eyes.

Looking at her mouth, one finds it two times smaller than her eye. Being an aspect of beauty, people usually describe a beautiful mouth to be as small as the ring of Solomon. Ah! What a beautiful sight!

Marriage, being one of the greatest pleasures of life pursued by men and women when they have come of age, Allah *Glorified is He* made it one of the pleasures of the Hereafter, but in a rather purer form, regardless of the act of intercourse itself. It is rather about intimacy in what was considered a blessing in the worldly life. In the Hereafter, the standards are different, as things are purified from the troubles of the worldly life.

For example, wine, honey and milk which are consumed in this life, will be present in the Hereafter, yet after being clarified from impurities. Thus, wine in the Hereafter is made delicious for those who drink, while wine in the worldly life is not delicious. The milk’s taste never changes and the water does not alter.

Likewise, marriage is cleared of its problems and troubles such that the couples in this life, when gathered in paradise, the husband will find his wife in a different form because Allah *Glorified is He* will have purified and rid her of the defects that she used to have in the worldly life.

If she were, for example, not beautiful, he would find her to be the most beautiful of women. If she used to have a sharp tongue, he would find her most civilized because they will be produced in a new creation. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘for We shall have brought them into being in a life renewed, having resurrected them as virgins, full of love, well-matched with those who have attained to righteousness.’ (*al-Waqi’a*: 35-38) Further, Allah says, ‘...and spouses pure...’ (*Al-Imran*: 15).

Therefore, the letter *ba* (with) in the Quranic verse: ‘...We shall wed them to maidens with large, dark eyes.’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 54) implies that it is a kind of marriage completely unlike the relationship between a man and a woman, as known in the worldly life. It is surely far removed from the issue of sexuality because life in the Hereafter has other blessings and other standards.

The words *hur* in (maidens with large, dark eyes) draws attention towards the pleasure of looking and enjoying them, just as someone looks at his friend whom he loves. If he is satisfied and content with this blessing, then he is welcome, otherwise there is whatever the soul desires and what pleases the eyes. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِكُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ آمِنِينَ لَا يَذُقُونَ فِيهَا الْمَوْتَ
إِلَّا الْمَوْتَ الْأُولَىٰ وَوَقَّهَهُمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ

Secure and contented, they will call for every kind of fruit [55] After the one death they will taste death no more. God will guard them from the torment of Hell [56]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 55 - 56)

The meaning of the phrase: ‘...they will call for...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 55) is that they will request in paradise. It may be asked, ‘Why shall they request it when in Paradise things appear before one’s eyes merely by thinking of them?’ The scholars maintain that it occurs after consuming the essential food, as Allah *Glorified is He* states: ‘and with the flesh of any fowl that they may desire.’ (*al-Waqi’a*: 21)

Thereupon, one wants fruits, which once he desires appear before him, even if they are: ‘...every kind of fruit...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 55), i.e. of all kinds and shapes. However affluent one may be, he would only eat one or two kinds of fruits after his basic meal. Nonetheless, in paradise, they request all kinds of fruit.

One may wonder as to how one’s abdomen could be large enough or as to how one could consume many types of similar things all at once. Surely, if it were to happen in this world, one would have troubles in their stomach, intestines, and others, but in paradise it is all different.

The verse affirms that they will feel: 'Secure and contented...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 55). The word *aminin* (secured) is used to remove perplexity and astonishment, asserting that in paradise, you can eat anything you want, and everything your soul desires.

Moreover, food is secure from being spoiled by the factors known in the worldly life, and is prepared and clarified by Allah *Glorified is He* from ruin, decay and other defects. It is pure enough that one may eat as much as he can without defecation. Therefore, the blessings of paradise are clarified and purified of flaws and defects.

Allah *Glorified is He* states: 'After the first death, they will taste death no more...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 56) which means that in paradise there is no death. Why is it then, that there is the exception of: 'After the first death...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 56)? In fact, the verse means that they will not taste death in paradise because they will have become immortal after the first death in the worldly life. In paradise, nevertheless, there is no death.

The word: 'taste' (*ad-Dukhan*: 56) implies that the sense of taste which is restricted to the tongue and its surrounding sensory area, covers the entire body, encompassing all the other senses.

Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* states regarding the suffering of the inmates of the fire: 'Taste this, you powerful, respected man!' (*ad-Dukhan*: 49) They taste the suffering, not only with their tongues but also with all their body organs. Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: '...and therefore Allah caused it to taste the all-embracing misery of hunger and fear in result of all [the evil] that its people had so persistently perpetrated.' (*an-Nahl*: 112) Allah *Glorified is He* portrays the sense of taste as a garment that covers the whole body, and thus every part of the body tastes the suffering.

The Quranic verse: '...Allah will guard them from the torment of Hell' (*ad-Dukhan*: 55-56) suggests that before these blessings are bestowed, Allah *Glorified is He* will protect them from the suffering of the blazing fire. Protection from chastisement precedes entering paradise since the rule provides, as previously stated, that cleaning the impurities precedes ornamentation. Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...whereupon he that shall be drawn away from the fire and brought into paradise will indeed have gained a triumph...' (*Al-Imran*: 185).

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكَ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٥٧﴾

A bounty from your Lord. That is the supreme triumph [57] (The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 57)

Surely, paradise, the blessings that it contains, and protection from suffering before all else are deemed as: ‘A bounty from your Lord...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 57). It is by Allah’s Grace and Favour that they are delivered from chastisement and admitted to paradise, not by virtue of their deeds.

This is a matter of disagreement between the scholars because Allah *Glorified is He* states: ‘...Enter paradise by virtue of what you were doing [in life]!’ (*an-Nahl*: 32), and yet in another verse, Allah says, ‘Say, “In [this] bounty of Allah and in His Grace – in this, then, let them rejoice: it is better than all [the worldly wealth] that they may amass!”’ (*Yunus*: 58)

Consequently, some verses highlight the issue of Divine Favour whereas other verses mention one’s deeds as the main reason for being admitted to paradise. Undoubtedly, the opponents of Islam pounce on these issues, trying to cast doubt on the Word of Allah, Lord of the worlds, and accusing it of contradiction. Far is it and high above what they say by great sublimity.

In order to clarify this matter, it is enough to consider that when you are concerned with your child, spend money and hire him a private tutor so that he excels, it is for his own benefit not yours. Further, if he does well, you give him a reward and encourage him to go on. Therefore, you burden yourself and spend your money, without gaining a benefit whatsoever, as the only one deriving benefit in this case is your child.

This is how Allah *Glorified is He* treats His creation; He created and provided for His creation. Then, He sent down guidance, adhering to which entitles one to a reward, and thereby getting upright character in the worldly life and being rewarded in the Hereafter.

Above need of the worlds, Allah *Glorified is He* confers His blessings and provides Guidance for His servants, even though to Him belong the Perfect

Attributes before He created the creation. Therefore, obedience does not benefit Him nor does disobedience harm Him.

Beware of thinking that your obedience and worship to Allah *Glorified is He* support His Lordship or add to His creation. You are the one who benefits first and last from His Guidance, to which one is honoured to belong and to be among Allah's servants.

This is affirmed in a Qudsi Hadith,⁽¹⁾ 'O My slaves! If the first and last of you, all the jinn and all the men among you possessed the heart of the most pious man among you, that would not increase My Dominion in any way. O My slaves! If the first and last of you, all the jinn and all the men among you possessed the heart of the most evil man among you, that would not decrease My Dominion in any way. O My slaves! If the first and last of you, all the jinn and all the men among you, were to stand in a single place and ask of Me, I could give to every man what he wants without decreasing My dominion any more than a needle when it enters the sea. This is because I am Generous, Glorious, and Existing. I give with a word and punish with a word. If I will something, all I do is say to it "Be!" and it is.'⁽²⁾

Therefore, the legal responsibility that Allah imposed upon us does not benefit Him in the slightest; it is rather for our own benefit. If we were to approach the matter rationally, we would find it more proper to pay for it, as the reward for obedience is therefore nothing more than Allah's favour, even His Legislation and Guidance are but one of His favours.

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* states: 'A bounty from your Lord. That is the supreme triumph.' (*ad-Dukhan*: 57) following and adhering to Allah's Guidance is undoubtedly the supreme triumph, in that by virtue of which one gains benefit in this world and gets rewarded in the Hereafter.

As for the Quranic verse: '...Enter paradise by virtue of what you were doing [in life]' (*an-Nahl*: 32), the scholars argue that it means to enter paradise

(1) *Divine words, other than the Holy Quran, narrated on the authority of the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him.*

(2) *Narrated by At-Tirmidhi in his Sunnan (2419), Ibn Majah in his Sunnan (4247) and Ahmad in his Musnad (20560, 20405), on the authority of Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari Allah be pleased with him. At-Tirmidhi graded this Hadith as hasan (good).*

because of your righteous deeds, which are merely a reason entitling you to it, but not a price to deserve it. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clarified this concept when he said, ‘None of you will enter paradise because of his deeds alone.’ They asked, ‘Not even you, O Messenger of Allah.’ He said, ‘Not even I, unless Allah covers me with His Mercy.’⁽¹⁾

Considering this Hadith we can understand the Quranic verse: ‘Say: “In [this] bounty of Allah and in His Grace – in this, then, let them rejoice: it is better than all [the worldly wealth] that they may amass!”’ (*Yunus*: 58).

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

فَإِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنَاهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

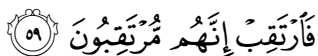
**We have made this Quran easy to understand –
in your own language [Prophet] – so that they
may take heed [58] (The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 58)**

Addressing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Allah *Glorified is He* elucidates His blessings upon him, of which is making the Quran easy for him that he reads it in a clear, Arabic language. The pronoun ‘it’ in the Quranic phrase: ‘...We have made it [this Quran] easy to understand...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 58) refers to the Quran which can be inferred from the subsequent phrase: ‘...in your own language...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 58). This is linguistic conformity since it was revealed in the Arabic language which is the language of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Furthermore, the conclusion of the verse: ‘...so that they may take heed’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 58) indicates that it is in the language of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his people. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘and never have We sent forth any Prophet otherwise than [with a message] in his own people’s tongue...’ (*Ibrahim*: 4). Thus, in your language, it is conveyed and in theirs, it is received, accepted and even subsequently conveyed, for they are the ones entrusted with spreading the word after Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari* in his *Sahih* (5241) and *Muslim* in his *Sahih* (5037, 5038, 5040) on the authority of *Abu Hurayra* Allah be pleased with him.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* states:



**So wait; the disbelievers too are waiting [59]
(The Quran, *ad-Dukhan*: 59)**

This verse directs Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to wait, for the disbelievers too are waiting. However, what is it that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* should be waiting for? And what are the disbelievers waiting for? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came with a call and Guidance, a light with which to guide his people. Even as they oppose his call, declaring themselves as his enemies and seeking to put out Allah's Light, he is concerned over them, wishing for them to be guided despite their harm and ridicule such that he almost destroys himself for the sake of his call.

Hence, in many Quranic verses, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses him to console and lighten his burden. Allah informs him: '...you are not bound to do more than deliver the message [entrusted to you] ...' (*ash-Shura*: 48), and 'Will you, perhaps, torment yourself to death [with grief] because they [who live around you] refuse to believe [in it]?' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 3)

Moreover, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses him, saying: 'Well do We know that what such people say grieves you indeed: yet, it is not you to whom they give the lie, but Allah's Messages do these evildoers deny.' (*al-An'am*: 33)

This is to tell Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* not be sad because what they say about him, for they respect, appreciate and know his truthfulness and elevated rank. They deem him high above telling lies, but Allah's Messages and signs are what they deny.

The word *fartaqib* (So wait) appears twice in this chapter; in the verse under discussion (*ad-Dukhan*: 59), and in the Quranic verse: '[Prophet], watch out for the Day when the sky brings forth clouds of smoke for all to see.' (*ad-Dukhan*: 10) The latter is related to the supplication of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'O Allah! Be severe on the tribe of Mudar! Inflict upon them years of famine like the years of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph).'

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (762, 951, 2715, 3124) and by Muslim in his *Sahih* (1082, 1083) on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him.

In turn, they were afflicted with famine and drought until they were forced to eat corpses and wool or fur mixed with dry blood. Unable to bear it anymore, they hastened to supplicate Allah to remove the punishment from them, but Allah knows that if He were to remove it from them they would return to their usual ways of denying His Messenger.

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: ‘...And whether We show you [in this world] something of what We hold in store for those [deniers of the truth], or whether We cause you to die [before that retribution takes place – know that, in the end], it is unto Us that they will be brought back.’ (*Ghafir*: 77)

The meaning of: ‘So wait...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 59) is to wait for the punishment that will befall them, as they wait for something to relieve and free them from your call. Teaching Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* how to debate with them, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Say, “Are you, perhaps, hopefully waiting for something [bad] to happen to us – [while nothing can happen to us] save one of the two best things? But as far as you are concerned, we are hopefully waiting for Allah to inflict chastisement upon you, [either] from Himself or by our hands! Wait, then, hopefully; we shall hopefully wait with you!”’ (*at-Tawba*: 52)

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is ordered to inform the disbelievers that though they are waiting for the believers to be afflicted by an adversity, only one of the two best things can happen to them; either victory or dying as martyrs. If Muslims gain victory over them, Allah’s Guidance is made supreme and predominant, and even if they die as martyrs, they will be alive with their Lord *Glorified is He*.

We, i.e. Muslims, are waiting for Allah to afflict you with a punishment from Him or at our hands. Therefore, we are waiting for evil to come to you, and you are waiting for goodness to come to us.

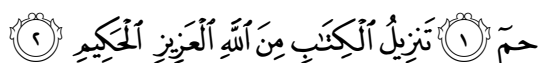
the chapter of

al-Jathiya

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

The chapter *al-Jathiya* (Kneeling) ⁽¹⁾:

Allah *Glorified is He* states:



***Ha Mim* [1] This Scripture is sent down
from God, the Mighty, the Wise [2]
(The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 1-2)**

This is one of the chapters starting with the discrete letters: ‘*Ha Mim*’ which appears in the beginning of some Quranic chapters. Although such letters have already been discussed, we are to shed light on them again, given that Allah *Glorified is He* repeats them in the beginning of this chapter, asking

(1) The chapter of *al-Jathiya* is the 45th chapter according to the order of chapters in the Noble Quran. It is a Meccan chapter, all of which verses were revealed before hegira according to Al-Hasan, Jabir, and ‘Ikrima. According to Ibn ‘Abbas and Qatadah, it is Meccan chapter except for the verse: ‘Tell all who have attained to faith that they should forgive those who do not believe in the coming of the Days of Allah...’ (*al-Jathiya*: 14). From their viewpoint, this verse was revealed concerning ‘Umar ibn Al- Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* as narrated by Al-Mawardi. However, Al-Mahdawi and An-Nuhas narrated on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* that it was revealed in Mecca about a man cursing ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* before hegira, and thus ‘Umar decided to strike him, whereupon the verse was revealed. The chapter has 37 verses, as mentioned by Al-Qurtubi in his *Tafsir* (9/9207). Its order of revelation is the same as its order in the *Mushaf*: it was revealed after the chapter of *ad-Dukhan* and before the chapter of *al-Ahqaf*. It was the 64th chapter according to the order of revelation.

Allah for help in interpreting them. In this way, it is not considered, in reality, a kind of needless repetition.

Contemplating the world before us, one would find in it a dominion that is perceptible and a realm that is invisible. Everything that is not perceived by our senses is thus considered from the unseen realm which no one has knowledge of except Allah. For example, faith and acts of worship come under these two categories of dominion, the invisible, and the perceptible.

Thus, by means of reason, the Oneness and Existence of Allah and Him Being the Creator of the entire cosmos can be proven. Man was brought into this existence to find it as is: the sun, the moon and the stars; the sky and the earth, the water and the air. For this reason, no one claims himself to be the Creator of this vast universe. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘and thus it is [with most people]: if you ask them, “Who is it that has created the Heavens and the earth?” – They will surely answer, “Allah”...’ (*Lugman*: 25). Allah further states: ‘Now if you ask those [who worship any being other than Allah] as to who it is that has created them, they are sure to answer, “Allah”...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 87).

This cosmos is perceivable. On the other hand, other issues related to faith are of the unseen realm. We believe in them because of being reported by Allah *Glorified is He* such as incidents related to the Hereafter, the Resurrection, the Reckoning, paradise, and hell. Prayer, for example, is one of the acts of worship the wisdom behind which can be logically deciphered. As such, we know that Allah made the prayers obligatory upon us five times a day, in order for His servants to be frequently in the Presence of their Creator, to derive strength and aid from Him. In addition, in prayer, one enjoys the company of Allah as he meets with Him, and obtains from the superabundance of both His material gifts and spiritual illuminations that He confers upon those who establish prayer.

In prayer, all people are equal; the rich and the poor, the leader and the subordinates, all prostrate to Allah. This shows that the universe as a whole is in a state of worship. However, we do not know as to why the dawn prayer is made of two units, the noon prayer of four, and the sunset prayer of three. Such are of the unknown issues in which we believe as are, according to what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who was entrusted with Allah’s religion, informed us.

In the same manner, there are matters that are perceivable and understandable in the Noble Quran as well as in others, that is from the unseen realm, which is beyond the comprehension of our minds such as the separate letters, the meaning of which Allah has kept to Himself alone. The rest of the Quran, however, is evident and perceivable, clear of meaning and manifest of intent, for Allah wants us to devote our worship to Him alone by having us believe in the unseen and in that which is perceptible and understandable.

It is to the unseen realm that true faith pertains. As for the perceptible realm, there is no room for belief or disbelief. For example, it is not acceptable to say, 'I believe that the sun is rising'. However, you do say, 'I believe in The Hereafter'.

Thus, the letters: '*Ha Mim*' refer to the separated letters with which some chapters of the Quran begin. Their meanings are unknown to us, although in which we believe and leave their meaning to Allah *Glorified is He*.

The Quranic verse: 'This Scripture is sent down...' (*al-Jathiya*: 2), refers to the intelligible realm, whereas in the previous chapter, the verse: '*Ha Mim*,' alludes to the Unseen realm, followed by a verse whose meaning is also intelligible to us: 'By the Scripture that makes things clear' (*ad-Dukhan*: 2).

The chapter proceeds: 'truly We sent it down on a blessed night...' (*ad-Dukhan*: 3). This verse signifies that both the unseen and the perceptible realms have been sent down from Allah. Subsequently, both are to be believed in equally as a means of truly devoting oneself to Allah *Glorified is He*. Therefore, in the same way as you worship Him by believing in that which is clearly understood, you are required to believe to the same degree in the unseen realm which cannot be comprehended with one's intellect. We can encompass what we are allowed to know of both realms through our faith and worship, trying our best to glean some of its meanings and secrets.

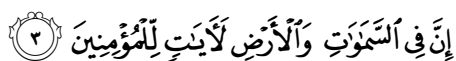
It is for this reason that we say: The Quran is based on continuity between the verses and the chapters in its entirety such that the last word in the chapter of *an-Nas* is connected to the first word in the chapter of *al-Fatiha*. Thus, we recite, without stopping: 'From among the jinn and mankind. In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful [All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds.' Thus, we proceed in a continuous manner.

Also, for this reason, we call the reciter of the Quran 'The one who is constantly in a state of moving forward. In other words, the reciter is the one who, on the point of finishing the Quran, continues such that he actually starts it again from the beginning.

As for the separated letters that appear at the beginnings of chapters, their pronunciation is based on the rule of stopping upon each one of them individually. Thus, you say, 'Ha Mim,' and you say, 'Alif Lam Mim,' whereas you do not utter these last three letters in such a manner in the following verse: 'Have we not (*A-lam*) opened up your heart' (*ash-Sharh*: 1).

To conclude, every articulated sound in the Quran has intent behind it and contains secrets, and it resembles the teeth of a key with which you open something. There are keys that serve their functions with just one tooth, others that do so with two, and others only work with three.

In His statement concerning the Book: 'is from Allah, the Exalted in Might, the Wise' He chose the name 'The Exalted' to indicate to us that the Quran will be revealed from heaven, and that you will find from amongst people those who will deny its message. So, do not be distressed by their reactions, and do not let their denials delude you, for Allah is the Revealer of this Book, The Almighty, and none can defeat Him. Furthermore, this might not be means of compulsion; rather, it is manifested by means of wisdom, as He states: 'The Wise.' For the one who is wise is he who puts things in their proper place.



There are signs in the heavens and the earth for those who believe [3] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 3)

'Allah indicates that He has made the Heavens and the Earth as a container and a vessel, and tells us: do not contemplate the Heavens and the earth in and of themselves; rather, contemplate the signs and secrets they contain, for they are replete with signs that Allah brings to light in due course of time.

It is for this reason that `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud *Allah be pleased with him* said⁽¹⁾: 'Contemplate the Quran deeply'; in other words, probe its meanings

(1) Related by *Al-Qurtubi* in his *Tafsir* (1/453); the Hadith is as follows: 'Contemplate the Quran deeply, for it contains knowledge of those who came before you and those that=

that you may take from its depths, like the earth when we plough it in order that we obtain its benefits. Similarly, everything is related to Allah, and within the Quran are innumerable treasures of bounty.

Now if the Heavens and the earth are receptacles that contain things within them, it behoves us to ask ourselves: which of the two is more valuable, the container, or the thing contained within it? Is the calling of people to faith - or the message - more valuable, or is the receptacle in which it is contained of greater value? Is the coffer of treasures itself more precious or what is put inside of it?

Likewise, the same goes for the Heavens and the earth despite their greatness and force. For the signs and the wonders that are within them are greater and more precious. Thus, you will recall that it is forbidden for us to place anything between the pages of the Quranic text. Why is this case? It is so in order that the Book of Allah *Glorified is He* is not used to hold or contain anything else, however precious or valuable it may be, for the Quran is more valuable and worth more than anything else, so do not use it to hold or contain anything.

In His statement: 'are signs for the believers,' the meaning is: Oh Believers! Be Mindful of Me concerning these signs, that you may use them to convince others from amongst the disbelievers and the atheists. For this reason, we as Muslims are most willing to sit down with them, engage with them constantly, and say to them: Contemplate this or that matter; think and ponder over the power of Allah concerning this or that matter.

This is our Message to which we have to address mankind. And how do we prove Allah's Existence and Presence? We do so by means of the signs in the cosmos. It is due to this that our Lord *Glorified is He* teaches us how to prove these points to mankind by means of these signs, and states: 'And of His signs are the night and day and the sun and moon. Do not prostrate to the

= will come after you.' In another narration: 'Whoever wishes to gain knowledge let him contemplate deeply the *Quran*.' Something similar to this relation is found in *Tafsir 'Al-Lubab of Ibn Khazin (1/375) [in the commentary of the 71st verse of al-Baqara]*. Ibn Mandhur in *Lisan Al-'Arab*, mentions the same Hadith ascribing it to Ibn Mas'ud. The author of *Taj Al-'Arus Az-Zabidi* and *Ibn Al-'Athir* also mention the Hadith.

sun or to the moon, but prostrate to Allah, who created them, if it should be Him that you worship.' (*Fussilat*: 37)

In other words, do not let the greatness of these signs beguile you; for their Creator is Greater, and what is more adorned with grace than what is beautiful is the One Who Created beauty and excellence. So, beware of turning away from Him as a result of your being struck with wonder and amazement with the night and the day, and the sun and the moon, for He is most worthy of worship, not that which He Has Created in the cosmos. This also indicates that the Creator *Glorified is He* is firmly intent on manifesting the wondrousness of His creation, intently concerned with guiding humanity and saving them from what will destroy them.

It is as if the sign were to say to the believers: by Allah, Allah has placed these signs of the cosmos firstly to convince you of His Reality, and then for you to convince others of His Reality.

Thus, if we think about scholars of religion and the scientists of the natural sciences in the domains of the study of human beings, the animal and plant kingdoms, and inanimate creation, we find that the later precedes the former, for the scholars of religion clarify and make clear to people what is licit and what is illicit according to Islamic Law, and take as their starting point belief in Allah. The explanation of the legal rulings of Islam is derivative and thus secondary to Faith in Islam itself. Thus, contemplation of the signs of the cosmos and demonstrative proof of their Creator *Glorified is He* by means of them are more important and prior.

One of the wonders of creation in these planets is that we know that the day is less in length of time than the year because the day is $1/365^{\text{th}}$ of a year. And We discovered Venus, the second celestial body in distance from the sun after Mercury. What is wondrous is that they discovered that the day of Venus is longer than its year. A day for us is a complete rotation of the earth around its own axis, and a year is one complete rotation of the earth around the sun. So, when they observed the length of the day of Venus, trying to reason analogically from the knowledge of an Earth day, they found that its day is longer than its year; for a day of Venus is equivalent to 244 Earth days, and its year is equivalent to 225 Earth days.

This phenomenon makes sense, for Venus does not follow a regular orbit. Thus, every celestial body has its own orbital path and motion, and a planet's orbit around its own axis can be faster than its rotation around the sun, and vice-versa. Here we can see the differences between the various planetary movements. Furthermore, there is nothing to prevent the possibility of a day of a planet being longer in length of time than a year. The last of these planets is Pluto, whose day is the equivalent of 2.5 Earth days, and its year equivalent to 268 Earth days.

From these natural phenomena, we are able to appreciate the power of the Creator *Glorified is He* and that the cosmos was created in precise detail and with perfectly orchestrated execution, not by chance, nor by some mode of creation that is not dynamic such as is the case with the shapes of inanimate objects. Rather, it is the facility with which the power of the Creator is manifested and His custodianship over the universe that sets this cosmos in motion and manages it with complete and perfect precision and execution.

After considering the cosmos, if the human being were to contemplate his own being, he would find another world replete with signs of Allah. Consider, for example, human beings in all of their variations of languages, dialects and tongues, their various forms of creation and their various characteristics: 'And of His signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colours. Indeed, in that are signs for those of knowledge.' (*ar-Rum*: 22)

If He had wished, He could have made us all from a single race, and speaking a single tongue, but through His wisdom in Creating the cosmos *Glorified is He* He has created like characteristics in creatures other than yourself, and then, at the same time, has distinguished you from the others in another aspect or characteristic completely.

In the past, we used to learn about the individual differences between the fingerprints of people. Now they have found voiceprints, jaw prints, and breath prints, all of which distinguish an individual human being from everyone else. They will never manifest in the same manner in another person, despite the immense numbers of human beings in existence. Is this not inimitable and miraculous about creation, calling us to belief in the Creator *Glorified is He*?

We note that from amongst the wonders of creation is that in the human body, there never occurs temperature variation within due to temperature variation outside of it, as is the case with other forms of matter. The body temperature of a person is usually 37 degrees, which you will find in a person both at the equator and the North Pole, for the body preserves this temperature inside of itself. Furthermore, you will find that every part of the body of a human being also has an internal temperature that is proper to it, in order that it may carry out its particular function.

You will be amazed to learn that the internal temperature of the eye never surpasses 9 degrees, whereas the internal temperature of the liver never goes below a temperature of 40 degrees, yet they are both parts of the same body. Despite all of this, the internal temperature within these parts of the body never varies with external temperature conditions, and thus never brings about a situation resulting in the internal temperature of the liver going below its normal internal temperature limit and reaching the internal temperature of the eye.

Thus, just as Islam concerns itself with the legislation of what is licit and illicit according to Islamic law and its explication to the people at large, it concerns itself, to an even greater degree, with the signs of Allah in the cosmos in every form of creation, human beings, animals, plants, and inanimate material.

To this end, read, if you would like, the following verses: 'Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky, and We produce thereby fruits of varying colours? And in the mountains are tracts, white and red of varying shades and [some] extremely black. And among people and moving creatures and grazing livestock are various colours similarly. Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Forgiving.' (*Fatir*: 27-28)

Is there any mention here of a legal ruling of Islamic law concerning the prayers, the Pilgrimage to Mecca, or fasting? All these verses are an appeal to contemplation and reflection over the cosmos. The scientists of this realm are those of the natural sciences, not the scholars of religion, for the former are the most knowledgeable of humanity in terms of the verses of Allah, and thus, the most knowledgeable of Allah, and the most reverent of Allah as well. Why is this case?

This is so because they have arrived at knowledge of the signs of Allah by their own effort. For this reason, the Islamic way of life has never neglected any of the Islamic sciences, for knowledge in general serves the purposes of faith and Divine monotheism, and takes up issues that are related to them.

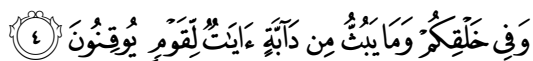
The True Lord *Glorified is He* gives us all these examples in the Quran that we may discern proofs of His Existence and Presence, and His attributes of Compulsion, Wisdom, Might, Mercy, and many others as well. Beyond this, through the contemplation of the signs of Allah in the cosmos, we can find what we need to put our lives in order, and correct our notions and concepts of the realities of affairs in the cosmos.

Take, for example, the relationship between the genders. Some are of the opinion that men are opposed to women, and that both genders are diametrically opposed to each other. As a result, we continuously hear about women's advocates and men's advocates opposing each other, as if there were a battle taking place, whereas when we read the Quran, we find His statement *Glorified is He*: '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)

Thus, the presence of elements of creation that are mutual and complementary does not mean that they are completely opposite to each other. So, beware of thinking that the night opposes or contradicts the day. Yes, it stands in contrast to it in the nature of things, but it does not actively oppose it or contradict it. For the night supports the day and assists it and the day likewise supports and assists the night. The two are complementary, forming a perfect, integrative whole, the night for rest and the day for work; each of the two are important for the other, and each has a special function in our lives and a specific role to play.

The condition of the male and the female is similarly complementary. This verse of the cosmos teaches us a lesson concerning our communal existence. Thus, there is no need for this clamour and fuss over gender relations. So, return to the Quran, for in it we can find a healing and a cure, and solutions to all our problems.

Then, The True Lord *Glorified is He* states:



**in the creation of you, in the creatures God
scattered on earth, there are signs for people of
sure faith[4] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 4)**

The Quranic context here moves us from contemplation of the signs of Allah in the Heavens and the earth to contemplation of our own selves, as He has stated: ‘And (also) in yourselves. Can you then not see?’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 21)

Thus, the proof of the Existence of the Supreme does not restrict itself to the signs of the Heavens and the Earth, for there are marvellous, wondrous signs in the atom, just as there are such signs in the galaxy. Furthermore, within the human body and its individual parts are signs and wonders as well. Expressing this point, the poet⁽¹⁾ has said:

You consider that you are an entity insignificant,
Yet within you is hidden the greatest universe⁽²⁾

The moment you hear the term ‘creation’ in the verse, you should understand from it the bringing about into existence of something from a state of non-existence; any existent entity was initially non-existent, whereupon Allah brought it about into existence. Furthermore, it is not applied to the event of creation, but rather, it is applied to the created beings themselves. It is for this reason that Allah states *Glorified is He*: ‘(All) this is Allah’s creation; show Me, then, what others than He may have created!’ (*Luqman*: 11)

Thus, the meaning refers to created beings. Yet, in another context, it refers to the event of creation, as in the same verse: ‘show Me, then, what others than He may have created!’ (*Luqman*: 11)

(1) 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* the cousin of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the husband of the Prophet’s daughter Fatima, and the fourth of the Rightly Guided Caliphs of Islam.

(2) The text of the lines of poetry can be found in *Al-Mawsu'at Ash-Shi'riyya* from the ode of *Bahr* (meter) *Al-Mutaqarib*, consisting of four verses:

Do you claim that you are an entity insignificant?

Yet within of you is hidden the greatest universe

And there is also the saying of the Mufti Fathallah from an ode consisting of 6 verses from the meter of *Al-Mutaqarib* as well. The Mufti Fathallah passed away in the year 1260 of the *Hijri* calendar.

Thus, in His statement: ‘And in the creation of yourselves’, the meaning is that from amongst the signs of the cosmos is that He created you – humankind. The process by which mankind was created consists of various stages through which Adam *peace and blessings be upon him* passed. At one time, he was not existent, whereupon Allah brought him about into existence from a state of nothingness. At the beginning, he was formless, unmoulded clay, and then Allah shaped him in due proportion, and breathed into him his spirit, and thus, life started to permeate in him, and he became a human being. Thereafter, Allah made his progeny to spread far and wide through intermarriage between men and women.

Therefore, in the process of our own creation, there are two phases: the first phase of creation, of our father Adam *peace and blessings be upon him* and the following phase involving the propagation and spread of the human species. For this reason, He states in another verse: ‘O mankind, fear your Lord Who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women.’ (*an-Nisa*: 1)

Thus, we human beings have the aspect of creation from nothingness, and the aspect of dissemination, or propagation. The spreading of the human species across the earth comes about through reproduction. As for the kingdom of non-human creatures, He did not mention anything concerning them except for the phase of dissemination: ‘and what He disperses of moving creatures.’

In other words, the verse refers to the spreading of the species; but where is there any mention of the stage of their creation? Allah brings forth a verse indicating creation in the first case, and leaves out mention of dissemination, and He brings forth a verse indicating dissemination in the second case, leaving out the mention of creation. Accordingly, it means that in your creation and what He spread from amongst you, and in the creation of animals and what He spread from amongst them.

Allah continues in the same verse: ‘are signs for people who are certain [in faith].’ Now, the True Lord *Glorified is He* has appraised us of the manner in which the first of creation came about from nonexistence through the creation of Adam. He then informed us of the various stages of this process of creation until Adam was established in existence as a full, perfect human being that moves on his own and proceeds along the earth. He did not make mention of the details of the rest of the creation of humanity in order that we

may draw by analogy our own case based on the process that we have mentioned earlier.

Then, when He spoke of Eve, He stated: 'who created you from one soul and created from it its mate.' In other words, He Created her in the same manner in which He Created the first soul, that of Adam. Also, for the same reason, He did not mention anything about the creation of the animals, for their creation may be understood by analogy from the creation of Adam.

There is no doubt that the one who contemplates the creation of mankind and the animals will find many signs and miracles that indicate the facility with which the Power of the Creator is manifested. Thus, in the first of creation, this Power of the Creator is manifested, since He created it from nothing, without any previous model of creation. He brought Adam into existence without the presence of a father or a mother, and then created Eve from Adam, from a father and without a mother. He also created 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* from a mother and without a father, and He created the rest of creation from a father and a mother.

Therefore, the Power and Ability of Allah in creating humanity and the animal kingdom covers all the logical possibilities that could exist concerning this issue, even if He brings about this potentiality only once, in order that the proof of His Creative Power and His Inimitability be made manifest in creation, and that His Right over creation be confirmed: 'But His command, when He intends a thing, is only that He says unto it: Be! And it is!' (*Ya Sin*: 82)

Now, the One who possesses the power of bestowal and endowment also possesses the power of withholding and prevention although, sometimes, the causal relations that usually bring about creation and the begetting of offspring abound and are fully present, nothing takes place: 'To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; He creates what he wills. He gives to whom He wills female [children], and He gives to whom He wills males. Or He makes them [both] males and females, and He renders whom He wills barren. Indeed, He is Knowing and Competent.' (*ash-Shura*: 49-50)

From the story of Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* you know how he did not beget any children, until he grew infirm through old age, his wife being barren and how by then he had given up all hope of ever having a child. Yet when Allah wished that Zakaryya (Zechariah) beget a child, He made the

ordinary rules of cause and effect subject to His command such that this was made possible, and gave glad tidings of a son, and named him as well.

All these are just some of the countless signs of creation spread out across the cosmos. At every stage of creation, one discovers miracles and the Power of Allah at work, beginning with the coming together of the man and woman, and the union of the animals, by means of the seminal fluid of the male reaching the ovum of the female. Then, if fertilization of the ovum takes place, pregnancy occurs, and the blood of the female transforms to serve as nourishment for the foetus, and serves as its means of provision until it is born. If pregnancy does not take place, the blood exits during the period of menstruation.

This means that when the Creator *Glorified is He* formed man, He created his means of provision alongside him. Thus, the foetus is not nourished by the nourishment that its mother takes herself, but rather, is nourished by a special type of food that is specific to it, and the proof of this is that the mother does not derive any benefit from the blood that nourishes the foetus if pregnancy does not take place.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘are signs for people who are certain [in faith].’ Certainty is true faith and firmly grounded belief that becomes embedded in the heart such that no doubt whatsoever is able to penetrate it, and in such a manner that this faith does not drift about in the mind, allowing the intellect to evaluate it and consider it for acceptance or rejection ever again. This is true belief, and this means that the heart is firmly fixed on it.

وَأَخْلَفَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ رِزْقٍ فَالْحَيَا
 بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيْحِ ءَايَاتٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٥﴾

**in the alternation of night and day, in the rain
 God provides, sending it down from the sky and
 reviving the dead earth with it, and in His
 shifting of the winds there are signs for those who
 use their reason [5] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 5)**

This verse indicates that from amongst His signs of the cosmos that are indicative of His Might *Glorified is He* is the alternation of the night and the

day. In other signs, we came to learn that the night by itself is a sign, and that the day by itself is a sign as well. The wording here indicates the alternation of the night and the day. Thus, the mere phenomenon of their alternation in and of itself is a sign of Allah.

Now the night and the day are different in many respects. They are different in terms of the darkness of the night and the light of the day, and their length and shortness of time, their respective functions, though they are both phenomena of time in which events take place. Furthermore, at times the night may become longer, and the day may become shorter, or the day may become longer and the night shorter, after which there may be a period when their lengths of time are equal.

For example, we find the night becoming longer in the winter and shorter in the summer, and this is for a particular divine wisdom. Consequently, we work throughout the day of the winter when the moderateness⁽¹⁾ of the weather permits and assists us in our work. For this reason, we need a longer period for rest, and we find this in the long nights of the winter.

If you were then to consider the night and the day from a wider perspective — in their aspect of making up the whole of the spherical body of the earth — you would find that they overlap each other harmoniously. This is because the day in the place where you reside is the night for someone else, and the night where you reside is the day for someone else. Thus, the two of them are present together, but in separate and distant places on the earth.

In this manner, you will find that at every moment of time, the night begins and the day ends at some point on earth, and that the day begins and the night ends at some other point on earth. Therefore, it is a rotational movement which never ends and which takes place at different points in time throughout the entire process.

If we were to consider the call to prayer, for example, we would find that it revolves around the earth at every single moment of time, with all of its

(1) This is the case in the warmer climates of the Arab world in places such as Egypt; the winter season is considered to be moderate, the summer to be more extreme, unlike countries in Europe or North America.

expressions. Thus, at the moment when you are saying ‘Allah is the Greatest!’ someone else is saying ‘I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of Worship except Allah!’ and another person is saying ‘I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah!’ and so forth.

The same is true for the daily prayers. Thus, at the time when you are praying the noon prayer someone else is praying the late afternoon prayer another person is praying the evening prayer, and yet another person is praying the night prayer, all at the same moment in time. Therefore, we can affirm the existence of all the prayer times at every single instant of time, and that the True Lord *Glorified is He* is worshipped at every moment in time with every form of worship and supplication, and that the words of the call to prayer revolve around the earth and are heard by everyone across the entire planet.

All of this is due to the alternation of the night and day, in terms of the varying degrees of their lengths in time, whether longer or shorter, and arising from the movement of the sun, another matter which requires subtlety and depth of perception and notice. When the sun rises where you are, it vanishes where someone else is, and thus every sunrise for one nation is a sunset for another nation. This explains His statement to us *Glorified is He*: ‘Lord of the two Easts, and Lord of the two Wests!’ (*ar-Rahman*: 17) He stated ‘the two Easts’ and ‘the two Wests’ because the sunrise that you experience as the East is the sunset someone else experiences at the same instant of time as the West. Now if you were to consider the entire expanse of time in its divisions of time by the second, you would find many sunrises and sunsets, as He stated *Glorified is He*: ‘by the Lord of the rising-places and the setting- places.’ (*al-Ma’arij*: 40)

Thus, if you were to observe the earth at a specific point, you would find the occurrence of both a sunrise and a sunset. Furthermore, He has already stated *Glorified is He*: ‘Lord of the East and the West.’ (*al-Muzzammil*: 9) Therefore, He is Truthful in everything of which He has informed us.

Also from amongst the signs of the night and day is the fact that Allah made them succeed one another. In other words, the night follows upon the day and the day follows upon the night. He stated *Glorified is He*: ‘And it is He who has made the night and the day in succession for whoever desires to remember or desires gratitude.’ (*al-Furqan*: 62)

We have understood (in our Islamic tradition) from this verse that the earth is spherical. This theory of knowledge that has been presented as something relatively recent is something confirmed by the Quran, and in fact, the Quran preceded it historically. The meaning, therefore, of the night and the day being successive of one another is that the earth is like a sphere, such that at the time of its first creation, it was created with one side facing the sun.

The side facing the sun is the day, and while night is at the opposite. The night and the day were created together, and were born together. Then, when the earth started to rotate, the night succeeded the day, and the day succeeded the night, and if it were not for the fact that the earth is spherical, this would never have happened.

This fact of existence has been confirmed by the True Lord *Glorified is He* in a clearer manner in His statement: '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)

This is so because the Arabs used to hold the belief that the night preceded the day. For this reason, they used to date their rites of ceremony by the rotation of the moon around the earth. Thus, we know the day from the movement of the sun, and we know the month from the movement of the moon and from the month comes knowledge of the year.

Similarly, the beginning of the month of *Ramadan* is confirmed by its first night, not by its day because it depends on the appearance of the new crescent. Again, it is for this reason that the Arabs believed that the night preceded the day, an erroneous view which the Quran put in balance. Allah says, 'nor does the night overtake the day.' Therefore, the two were created at the same point in time, something which would never have been possible except if the earth were spherical. There is no precedence of one over the other.

In His statement: 'and [in] what Allah sends down from the sky of provision and gives life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness.' (*al-Jathiya*: 5)

Allah indicates that He sends down many signs from the Heavens, some of which are material, others of which are spiritual. The spiritual sign is the Book that He revealed upon the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be*

upon him for the guidance of creation. The material signs are those such as the rain, which Allah has named ‘provision’, for it is the source of provision when it descends to the earth and revives it with vegetation and fruits.

Every form of provision that comes from the direction of the Heavens of the Creator is something Divinely sent down, even if it be in the depths of the earth. For this reason, He said the following statement about iron: ‘and He revealed iron, wherein is mighty power and (many) uses for mankind.’ (*al-Hadid*: 25)

In this manner, Allah made iron a tool for man’s use, as an example to confirm His Power *Glorified is He* against those who stubbornly resist the call to faith; and stated at the end of the verse: ‘and so that Allah may make evident those who support Him and His messengers unseen.’ (*al-Hadid*: 25)

Concerning His statement: ‘from the sky’ it is well known that the sky is not the storehouse of water; rather, water is found in the clouds, which are within some parts and vicinities of the earth and follow it in its motion, as we have stated previously. As for the sky, it is something of an entirely different order of existence, and much more distant than whatever the mind can conceive. The intended meaning of the verse is: from the direction of the sky.

The one who ponders over the water cycles in nature will find that they are upon the earth in such a manner as to cover three fourths of the earth’s land mass, and most of it is salt water. This is so for a divine wisdom, in that the percentage of salt in the water preserves it from adverse change, stagnancy, and foulness. From the vapour that rises, the clouds are formed, and thereafter, rain falls carrying fresh water that is pure and suitable for drink and for the growth of agriculture, and beneficial for many other uses.

From the signs of Allah in the creation of water is that any particular stretch of salt water enlarges to allow for the enlargement of a mass of vapour clouds when the latter are formed. Consequently, the volume of evaporated fresh water that is enough to sustain the life of living organisms on earth thereafter increases. You will then find that the saltiness of the water in the seas and the oceans is of a suitable measure and proportion which preserves the water from stagnancy and foulness, and allows for the life of fish and all other forms of sea life to continue.

If the saltiness of the water were to increase beyond this limit, all forms of its sea life would perish, as we find in the Dead Sea, where the percentage of salt is much higher due to the sea being fully landlocked, without any tributaries of water coming to it to reduce the level of salt in the water.

In order for us to learn of the Power of Allah in His sending down of fresh water from the sky, this water from which there is enough for all of creation to drink, and for all of agricultural produce across the earth to derive benefit, consider how burdensome the production of a bottle of filtrated water is when you prepare it in a factory or filtration facility. Allah sends down this water, made fresh, clear and pure, and cold and refreshing, from the sky without any effort, nor any financial costs or expenses on your part.

This water in and of itself is one of the signs of Allah, for it is by means of it that life exists on earth. For this reason, the Quran calls it provision. Some commentators say: 'this means that water is a means to bring about provision'; others say: 'no, this is not so; rather, the water itself is provision'. It is true that it is a means for provision at the point when we use it to irrigate the land for agriculture, but it is a direct form of provision when we drink it or add it to food and the like.

Furthermore, in His statement: 'and gives life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness' is another sign. The reference to 'the earth after its lifelessness' is to that part of the earth that is arid, bleak, and without vegetation, which Allah easily brings back to life with vegetation thereafter, as He indicates in another verse: 'And you see the earth barren, but when We send down upon it rain, it quivers and swells.' (*al-Hajj*: 5) Then, in the main verse, He shifts our attention to another sign: 'and [in His] directing of the winds.'

It means the changes of their direction from here to there, or the change of their states and conditions; for at times they come as a gentle, light breeze, and at times they rage violently; at times they are hot, and at other times cold; at times, they are fecundating and life-giving, and at times they are destructive and ruinous. All of these are states of the winds which the Creator changes from one to another in whatever manner He Wishes *Glorified is He* and none else is able to do likewise.

When you ponder over how the actual change of winds takes place, you find one of the truly wondrous phenomena that is present in existence due to The Creator. Turn your gaze to these towers and skyscrapers, and ask yourself: who brings about the conditions to allow these gigantic buildings to rise above the earth, and who supports them in such a manner that they do not bend, despite the blowing of violent winds against them?

The thing that supports them and props them up is the air that encircles them from every direction. If you were to evacuate the volume of air on any one side of the building, it would collapse on this side, vacated of the air that was once there.

Therefore, air itself is what preserves the equilibrium of the building. For this reason, the moment when you find the Quran using the term ‘wind’ in the plural, know that it is for the sustaining of life, and for what is good and beneficial, and whenever the term is in the singular, it is associated with destruction and ruination.

The single wind annihilates, and the winds as a group support and give life, for the former comes from one direction only, whereas the latter come from all directions and thus bring about the balance that is needed for life to continue and abound.

In the context of the discussion concerning the signs of Allah and the enumeration of His gifts, read here the following verse: ‘Rather, it is that for which you were impatient: a wind, within it a painful punishment, destroying everything by command of its Lord. And they became so that nothing was seen [of them] except their dwellings. Thus, do We recompense the criminal people.’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 24-25)

He also states: ‘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)

In His statement: ‘are signs for a people who reason.’ He refers to the intellect, which encounters new events and phenomena, considers and examines them, and decides which of these that contends for its acceptance it should accept as truth. It then extracts and chooses the truth from amongst them, which it casts into the heart, becoming firmly grounded belief protected against doubt.

Allah Have Mercy upon Fakhr Ad-Din Ar-Razi⁽¹⁾ who carried out an extensively detailed and informed analysis comparing these verses in the chapter of *al-Jathiya* with similar verses from the chapter of *al-Baqara*; the verses in the chapter of *al-Jathiya* beginning with: 'Indeed, within the heavens and earth are signs for the believers,' until 'are signs for a people who reason.' (*al-Jathiya*: 3-5)

And the following verse in *al-Baqara*: 'Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the [great] ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits people, and what Allah has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every [kind of] moving creature, and [His] directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and the earth are signs for a people who use reason.' (*al-Baqara*: 164)

The first difference that he found between the two groups of verses was the difference in subject matter: in the chapter of *al-Jathiya*, there is the following: 'within the heavens and earth.' As for *al-Baqara*, the verse is as follows: 'In the creation of the heavens and earth.' They both have the same meaning, for creation refers to the event of originating something from nothing. Thus, the event itself is termed 'creation'. The term is also applied to the created entities of the universe, and the proof for this is His saying *Glorified is He*: '(All) this is Allah's creation.' (*Luqman*: 11) In other words, 'All these are Allah's created entities'. Therefore, the meanings of the two groups of verses are the same.

Secondly, he counted the number of verses that were related concerning the cosmos in *al-Jathiya*, and found that there were six such verses, and he did the same with *al-Baqara* and found that there were eight such verses. When he then researched further into the additional two verses in *al-Baqara*, he found them in His statements *Glorified is He*: 'and the [great] ships which

(1) Muhammad ibn Abu 'Abdullah Fakhr Ad-Din Ar-Razi, the Imam and Quranic commentator, of Qurayshi descent, born in 544 A.H., whose origins are from Tabaristan, and who was born in

Ar-Ray (present-day Teheran); he passed away in Harra' in the year 606 A.H. He has written works such as his commentary of the Quran *Mafatih Al-Ghayb*, *Ma'alim Usul Al-Fiqh* and *Muhsil Afkar Al-Mutaqaddimin*.

sail through the sea with that which benefits people’, and ‘the clouds controlled between the heaven and the earth.’ (*al-Baqara*: 164)

Ar-Razi concluded by saying, ‘These two verses concerning the ships and the clouds do not need to be mentioned by Allah in *al-Jathiya*, as what Allah suffices for them: “and [His] directing of the winds.” This is so because both the ships and the clouds are carried forward by the movements of the winds.’

The final difference between the two groups of verses is that the verse in *Al-Baqara* ends with a single phrase, which is: ‘are signs for a people who use reason.’ (*al-Baqara*: 164)

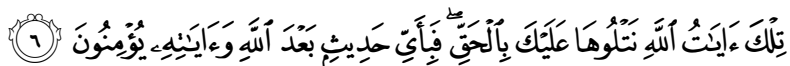
On the other hand, the verses in *al-Jathiya* end with three different phrases, which are the following: ‘are signs for the believers’ (*al-Jathiya*: 3), ‘are signs for people who are certain [in faith]’ (*al-Jathiya*: 4), and ‘are signs for a people who reason.’ (*al-Jathiya*: 5)

The moment the believer hears anything from Allah, he confirms it and believes in what Allah has informed him. Furthermore, certainty comes about to the one who actively seeks the truth, who searches for it in any given matter that is a point of knowledge, and desires to reach a state of certainty by means of such striving for the truth.

Now if man is not a believer who is certain of his belief, nor a seeker of the truth, does he not at least have enough intelligence to distinguish between things such that he knows what he consumes for food and drink, and of what he takes hold, and of what he places down?

Therefore, these three different phrasal endings represent the stages of attaining sound consciousness and awareness of the true nature of things, and basic intellectual comprehension of simple matters is the lowest level of understanding. For this reason, He ended the verse of the chapter of *al-Baqara* with the specific phrase indicated above.⁽¹⁾

(1) After the completion of his analysis, Ar-Razi states; ‘Allah mentioned three different ending phrases in *al-Jathiya*, the first of which is ‘those who believe’; the second of which is ‘those who are endowed with inner certainty’ and the third of which is ‘those who have sense’. I believe that the reason for this order is that it is in reference to what is said [to those who disbelieve]. If you are not of the believers, then understand these=



**These are God's signs that We recount to you
[Prophet, to show] the Truth. If they deny God
and His revelations, what message will they
believe in? [6] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 6)**

The verse begins with: 'These'. This indicates the other verses of the Quran, or the signs of the cosmos that were referred to previously. 'We recite to you in truth.' The truth, as we have mentioned previously, is something that is firmly established and which does not change, nor does it accept any falsehood. Truth is the judgement of something that corresponds with reality, and falsehood is the judgement of something that diverges from and contradicts what is actually real.

For this reason, we have mentioned previously that the witness to the truth will never change any claims that he makes, no matter how many times he may be asked a question. As for the witness to falsehood, there is no question that he will change his tune from time to time. This is so because the witness to the truth presents reality as it is, and thus comes forward with a single statement which corresponds to that reality, and does not change his statement, whereas the witness to falsehood always presents his erroneous claims and his delusional fancies, and thus, it is inevitable that his claims will change and vary.

It is because of this that The True Lord *Glorified is He* wishes for us to judge by the truth, and make it the standard by which we comprehend all matters, just as we use the metre alone to measure anything else, for example, and never deviate from it as a standard of measurement.

He wishes for us to judge by the truth and make it foundational in our comprehension of matters and our everyday lives. Analogously, a watch will never tell the time precisely and accurately unless it has been calibrated to the correct time itself.

= proofs that are being laid out to you; and if you are not from amongst the believers, nor from amongst those who have certain faith, then at least you are within the group of those who have sense and possess an intellect; so, strive hard to understand and comprehend these proofs that are offered to you.'

For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* states the following concerning the two signs of the sun and the moon: ‘The sun and the moon are made punctual.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 5)

In other words, these are two entities created by means of exact and precise reckoning, and both are created with precision and calculation in terms of their heavenly motions such that Allah *Glorified is He* has made them instruments by means of which time can be kept. Thus, the object which you consider to be a standard must of necessity be calibrated and fine-tuned itself to what is most correct, and must of necessity be evaluated in a manner corresponding to its function as the standard.

It is because of this that Allah *Glorified is He* informed us that He created the Heavens and the earth in truth, for they move along their paths in perfectly orchestrated motion, and have never, ever deviated from their courses since the time when Allah Created this cosmos and will never, ever deviate from their specified movements until the coming of the Last Hour.

We stated previously that this is so because the truth is something firmly embedded which does not change, and therefore something that remains, and it is that which is victorious, which overcomes falsehood at the end of the struggle. Furthermore, even if falsehood rises and appears, it is only for a temporary period of time such that it is given an opportunity to be manifest until it torments people and the society at large is made miserable by it; then, people return to the realm of the truth. For this reason, we say that falsehood is actually one of the soldiers of truth.

Now if Islam had gained ascendancy in the Arabian Peninsula because of the inimitability of the Arabic of the Quran, how did it gain ascendancy and spread in the lands of the Persians and Romans? Some commentators have said: This is so because in that period of history, the non-Muslim empires were completely tyrannized by falsehood, and so when they saw the justice and tolerance of Islam, they hurried towards it in droves, and thus, Islam took over half of the world in half a century, for people all over the earth were yearning for something like this religion of truth.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wishes to provide us with a tangible picture by which truth and falsehood are represented in one snapshot, and so He

states: 'He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity, and the torrent carries a rising foam. And from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is foam like it. Thus, Allah presents [the example of] truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it vanishes, [being] cast off, but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth. Thus does Allah present examples.' (*ar-Ra'd*: 17)

Now in His statement *Glorified is He*: 'Then in what statement after Allah and His verses will they believe?' He means: If all of these signs of the cosmos have not convinced you, nor have all of these miraculous wonders of the cosmos, and if you have not been convinced and moved by the very words of Allah Himself, then what can you possibly be made to believe in after that?

Therefore, the issue, as far as they are concerned, is one of stubborn opposition and violent disputation, for if the very words of Allah Himself have not convinced them, what other words can be used to convince them of anything thereafter? We ask them: is there any discourse that is more truthful than the words of Allah Himself? Is there any relation of news that is more truthful than His news? Allah *Glorified is He* repeatedly shows love and affection towards you by clearly expressing His signs in the cosmos, that you may believe, and that He may take you by the hand into the realm of true belief even though He has no need of you. He merely desires the best for you because you are His servants and His works of creation, and He wishes you to be in the best of conditions. For this reason, He sent to you messengers, revealed Divine books to you, and made clear to you what is licit and illicit according to the Divine Law, and what is true and what is false; so why all the violent disputation? Why all the stubborn opposition to acceptance of faith?

Now although faith in Allah is a high distinction, and to show humble veneration of Him is to occupy a high rank, the term 'humble veneration' in general is a term that is detested, for it indicates lowliness and brokenness of spirit. As for having humble veneration towards Allah, it is a high distinction, a mark of honour, and a high rank with Him.

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ أَفَّاكٍ أَثِيمٍ ﴿٧﴾ يَسْمَعُ ءَايَاتِ اللَّهِ تُنْزِلُ عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ يُصِرُّ
مُسْتَكْبِرًا ۖ كَانَ لَمْ يَسْمَعْهَا فَبَشِّرُهُ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٨﴾

Woe to every lying sinful person [7] who hears God's revelations being recited to him, yet persists in his arrogance as if he had never heard them — [Prophet] bring him news of a painful torment! [8] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 7-8)

Some commentators have said that the word 'Woe' refers to a gorge deep in hell, or to a calamitous destruction from which there is no escape or deliverance. The term 'Woe' in general usage differs according to the one who uses it for warning. When one who is equal to your standing says to you: 'Woe to you!', you anticipate being anguished by him to the extent that is proportionate to his ability to exact that anguish on you, and commensurate with his ability to carry out what he threatens you with by manifesting his tyranny upon you. Now, if the one using such a threatening term is the True Lord *Glorified is He* we understand that it is a complete annihilation, unalterable which no-one has the power to change; a serious woe that cannot be resisted or repulsed.

So, to whom is this threat directed? It is directed to '...every sinful liar.' Lying is to turn something completely upside down, or the subversion of what is true with purposed intention. From this we note His statement *Glorified is He*: 'And the overturned towns He hurled down.' (*an-Najm*: 53) The verse refers to villages that Allah turned completely upside down, head over heels, and thereby made their highest structures lowest.

Related to this, as well, is the story of the slander that was propagated against the rights of 'Aisha, *Allah be pleased with her*: 'Indeed, those who slander are a group among you.' (*an-Nur*: 11) Thus, slander, falsely accusing others of misdeeds, is the most abominable, heinous kind of lie for it is an intentional lie designed to make people turn away from the truth and accept falsehood. What is worse is that slander does not affect just one person; rather, it affects a large group of people, and thus, its evil transgresses beyond its mere effects on a single person. Correspondingly, a suitable punishment is required for such a gross transgression upon creation, according to Islamic law. Therefore,

the moment you hear the word 'Woe,' you should know that it is reference to a truly grave sin.

Also, the word 'liar' signifies a habitual practice. 'Sinful' is the one who committed a grave sin repeatedly and was so much engaged in it until he became an inveterate practitioner of the evil deed.

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says of this inveterate slanderer and sinner as one: 'Who hears the verses of Allah recited to him, then persists arrogantly as if he had not heard them.' It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* wishes to make us familiar with what slander really and truly is in its essence, for the inveterate liar lies against one that is like him, or lies against a whole family or group, but this person in particular lies against the entire world when he falsifies everything that is true, and does so intentionally and purposefully. For this reason, they say in juridical matters in court that someone has committed a crime 'with premeditation and opportunity (to commit the crime)'. Thus, in the verse: 'arrogantly,' the description refers to someone who exalts himself above the truth and disdains it out of arrogance.

In a Noble Hadith, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* states, 'Arrogance is disdaining the truth out of self-conceit and having contempt for people.'⁽¹⁾ Thus, he becomes arrogant over others, for the various signs come to him by means of someone whom he believes to be beneath him; and by doing this, he acts outrageously against the truth, and outrageously against the one who tells the truth, as The Quran relates about those like him: 'And they said, 'Why was this Quran not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

Thus, the problem with them is not something in the Quran, for they themselves are people of eloquence and gifted orators, and know of the inimitability of the Quran and its truth; rather, the problem is that they are envious of the man to whom the Quran was revealed, and consider and appraise him by the standards of position and wealth that they have attained. Thus, the Divine message, according to them, must be sent down to a man

(1) *This is related by Muslim in his collection Sahih Muslim (Number 131) in 'The chapter on the forbiddance of harbouring pride' from a Hadith related by 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud Allah be pleased with him.*

who is rich, from the prestigious men of the nation and from amongst its leading figures. Yet, this is quite strange for them, to hold such a belief, for the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had a very high station amongst them before he was mandated with deliverance of the Divine message, and they used to speak readily of his truthfulness and his trustworthiness. In fact, they had so much trust in his judgment that they appointed⁽¹⁾ him to judge between them in making the final decision concerning their dispute over the Black Stone, when the various tribes disagreed with each other over who should have the right to place it in its proper position in the *Ka'ba*. So, the contradiction between their consideration of him as someone trustworthy and their disbelief in him thereafter is clear. They used to call him a magician, a soothsayer, an inveterate liar, and a masterfully articulate poet that could beguile people with his words. Thus, when there was an extended period of time in which there was no revelation given to him, by which he might respond to certain specific claims of theirs, they alleged: 'Truly, The Lord of Muhammad scorns him.'⁽²⁾

As for His statement *Glorified is He*: 'So give him tidings of a painful punishment'; it is well known that 'glad tidings' refer to the relation of good news of something before it actually takes place. Furthermore, it is called 'glad tidings' because it brings joy and happiness, manifest upon the faces of those who receive them, so the moment that you hear such news, it pleases you. Thus, the usage of the term 'glad tidings' here in connection with punishment is a means of conveying mockery and scorn, and it is a type of punishment and insult, like the case of the man who urges his son to review

(1) This is related by Ibn Kathir in his *As-Sira An-Nabawiyya* (1/272). In the Hadith, the people of Mecca stated: 'We shall judge between ourselves by means the first man that comes out from this road.' The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was the first to come out of the road towards them, so he judged upon their case, deciding that members of every single tribe would all bear the Black Stone together on a cloth, and then raise it together to put it in its proper place.

(2) This is mentioned by At-Tabari in his *Quranic commentary*, from the statement of Qatada concerning the statement of Allah: 'Your Lord has not forsaken you, nor does He scorn you.' (*ad-Duha*: 3) He stated: 'Jibril (Gabriel) delayed in conveying revelation to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and so the idolaters said: "Truly, his Lord scorns him and has forsaken him."'" This is similarly related by Ad-Dahhak.

his lessons and demonstrate seriousness and diligence in his studies, but the son disobeys his father's commandments so that when the final results appear, he finds that his son has failed in his studies, and thus says to him: 'Take delight in the good news! You have failed'! In saying this, the father wishes to mock and punish his son for his negligence.

وَإِذَا عَلِمَ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا شَيْئًا اتَّخَذَهَا هُزُوًا أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ ﴿٩﴾

**who, if he knows anything about Our revelations,
ridicules it! Such people will have a humiliating
torment [9] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 9)**

This is so because after having persisted in evading the signs of Allah, and having shown arrogance towards them, he necessarily must return at some moment or another to his true self and allow for his intellect to process what he has heard; thus, some of the truth of those pieces of knowledge that he has learned of from the signs of Allah finally reach him.

'And when he knows anything of Our verses, he takes them in ridicule.' Yet even though part of the truth of what he has heard reaches him, he makes them an object of derision and ridicule. 'Those will have a humiliating punishment.'

This is on top of the punishment mentioned in the previous verse, where the Lord of Might and Nobility grants him glad tidings of the fact that he will have a grievous, painful punishment.

These are different kinds of punishment; may Allah save us from them! For a painful chastisement is one that causes you deep pain by means of your physical senses and causes you agony, and your physical body and your various limbs experience pain and suffering. This is not even including the humiliating pain referred to in the Quran, for the person has been deflected off his true course, as they say. The humiliating punishment is the punishment of the ego, which humiliates it, debases, and destroys its sense of nobility and dignity. This is so because some people are sometimes unaffected by any of the physical pain caused to them by a palpable beating, but it hurts them deeply to have their sense of dignity and pride wounded even if it be by a mere word.

There is also the term ‘grave punishment’; in other verses, punishment to its furthest extent. It is in this manner that the True Lord *Glorified is He* combined every type of punishment as recompense for their arrogance, their violent disputation, and their stubborn opposition to the signs of Allah which are patently clear and beyond the possibility of denial on the part of anyone who considers them seriously.

Furthermore, there is an indication in the verse that when a human being devotes himself exclusively to the pursuance of the truth, and clears himself of any preconceived notions, and thereafter, ponders the matter over again with his intellect with objectivity, he will necessarily arrive at the strand of truth that leads him to the reality of the affair in question. Thus, the sincere renewal of commitment that the seeker makes to himself leads to the truth. It is for this reason that the True Lord *Glorified is He* teaches man the sound manner of contemplating affairs, and instructs him in the manner in which he may search for the truth, and so He states: ‘Say, “I only advise you of one [thing] - that you stand for Allah, [seeking truth] in pairs and individually, and then give thought.” There is not in your companion any madness.’ (*Saba*: 46) In other words, He means: ‘Leave aside the speculation of the masses, for they are not coherent; they will lead to chaos, and the truth will get lost within’.

Now contemplation is the operation of the intellect, and the intellect is the faculty and power that protects you from erroneous views, and guides you and takes you by the hand towards the truth. The intellect, even by its very name in Arabic is the cord that is used to hobble the feet of a riding beast so that it does not stray and wander off from its owner. In the same manner, the intellect constrains its owner from false ideas and notions.

Therefore, when these people retreated unto themselves and allowed their intellects to consider what they had heard. They arrived at something of the truth, but their haughtiness and their stubborn opposition prevented them from following it. The most illustrative example of this is the statement that some of them say to the others: ‘And those who disbelieve say, “Do not listen to this Quran and speak noisily during [the recitation of] it that perhaps you will overcome.”’ (*Fussilat*: 26)

Now if they were not sure of the truth of the Quran and its impact upon the soul, they would never have said such a thing; but the literary style and

force of the Quran captivated them and penetrated the innermost depths of their souls. Had they left themselves to their natural, primordial states, they would have believed; but instead, they confronted the Quran with souls filled with evil inclinations and the desire to be free from any restrictions that the way of truth brought by the Quran might place upon them and their base desires.

مِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ مَا كَسَبُوا شَيْئًا وَلَا مَا
أُتُّوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٠﴾

**Hell lurks behind them and their gains will not benefit
them, nor will those beings they took as protectors
beside God — a tremendous torment awaits them [10]
(The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 10)**

‘Before them’, has the meaning of something that will come to you in the future, as in this verse: ‘Before them is Hell.’ Thus, Hell will await them in the future. ‘Before them’ is thus something which is found before another thing which hides or conceals it. What conceals knowledge is a veil of time or a veil of place. For instance, we are sitting here, right now (in this lesson) in one place, and each one of us can see the other. However, none of us can see who is outside of this place, for what conceals that from us is a physical barrier of place.

Now when I speak to you of the future, you will find that the future is also veiled from you, by the barrier of time, as it relates to the future. Similarly, the veil of the past makes the past itself imperceptible to you.

Now the Knowledge of Allah *Glorified is He* pierces all these barriers. Time, for Him is equally the past, present or future. For this reason, He brings forward something that happened in the past, and speaks about it as if it were present. Allah *Glorified is He* also states, addressing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘And you were not with them when they cast their pens as to which of them should be responsible for Maryam (Mary). Nor were you with them when they disputed.’ (*Al-Imran*: 44)

For this reason, Allah pierces the veil of the future, as He indicates in His statement concerning the ongoing struggle between Persia and Rome: ‘*Alif. Lam.*

Mim. The Byzantines have been defeated. In the nearest land. But they, after their defeat, will overcome. Within three to nine years. To Allah belongs the command before and after. And that day the believers will rejoice.' (*ar-Rum*: 1-4)

This is because the Muslims were worried about the Persians gaining victory over the Romans. The Persians were Magi, adherents of Mazdeism, and had no revelation or Heavenly inspiration sent to them. As for the Romans, they were from the people of the Book by being Christians; they believed in messengers sent from Allah. Thus, it would be the good fortune of Islam if Rome were to be victorious. So, Allah granted the Muslims the glad tidings of this victory before it took place by several years. Therefore, the True Lord informs Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of events of the future in the Quran, which is recited to worship Allah in every prayer. So how is it that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* could announce these glad tidings - seeing as how highly unbelievable they were at the time - and do so in a manner such that the people in Persia and Rome would eventually hear of them? The answer is that he could announce such news because he was absolutely certain that it was true and veracious, and that it must come to pass.

This is an instance of the piercing of the veil of the future, and this is what really happened. In a matter of years, Rome gained victory over Persia, and the Muslims gained their prophesized victory against the disbelievers at the Battle of Badr. Allah *Glorified is He* states: 'And that day the believers will rejoice in the victory of Allah.' (*ar-Rum*: 4-5)

In His statement: 'Before them is Hell', He means that it will await them in the future, and thus, is ahead of them. This is an example of the piercing of the veil of the future. 'And what they had earned will not avail them at all.' He means they will not be protected from the evil of what they were upon because of what they acquired of evil acts in the past, of worshipping false idols and deifying the creation of Allah. Furthermore, is the idol free of need from its worshipper when the worshipper himself is the one who created it? The worshipper is the one who sets it upright if the wind turns it over or carries it off. Similarly, whoever from amongst mankind worshipped them will soon precede them into hell; no helper shall they have, nor anyone to defend them from what awaits them.

Now the verb 'earn' is never used for evil except if what is evil has become something habitual to the person in whom it exists, and has become something that is practically inherent and natural. Such a person will hardly desist from evil action, and it will be a very light matter for him to commit such evil again, until it becomes something habitual to him. The verb 'earn' refers to what they have done of evil deeds.'

'Nor what they had taken besides Allah as allies.' In other words, 'the idols they worship besides Allah'. Likewise, they will not prevent them from the punishment. 'And they will have a great punishment.' Thus, the matter does not end merely with their being forsaken and their inability to defend themselves, but it goes much further: for them there awaits an immense chastisement, or in other words, severe to the utmost degree of pain.

﴿١١﴾ هَذَا هُدًى وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مِّن رَّجْزٍ أَلِيمٌ

**This is true guidance; those who reject their Lord's
revelations will have a woeful torment [11]
(The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 11)**

There is an indication here of guidance, which is the way that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came with through this Quran. True guidance is what directs you forward, or in other words, indicates to you the road that takes you to your destination by means of the shortest and easiest road, and the one that is safest, without difficulty or hardship upon the soul.

In the beginning of the chapter of *al-Baqara*, there is the statement: 'Those are upon guidance from their Lord' (*al-Baqara*: 5). Thus, guidance is, as it were, the vessel which carries to you to your goal, and the vehicle which moves forward with you until it delivers you safely to your destination. 'And those who have disbelieved in the signs of their Lord' in this verse, Allah states 'their Lord,' even though they are disbelievers in Him. This is because Allah is a Lord that shows love and affection towards them, even with their disbelief in Him and their denial of Him. This is, as we stated previously, a Divine gift which does not distinguish between the believer and the disbeliever; thus, He grants it to all, and feels compassion for every one of

humanity, for they are all His servants and His works of creation ‘Will have a painful punishment of foul nature’.

In one place, He states, ‘a painful chastisement’ and in another place, He states: ‘painful punishment of foul nature.’ The word ‘punishment’ has caused many problems in terms of how it is to be understood amongst the scholars of religion concerning some of the legal punishments legislated by Islamic law. Some of them say, ‘It is apparent that there is no mention of stoning to death in the Quran, but there is only the mention of punishment by lashes to be found’, and they use, as proof, His statement *Glorified is He* concerning female slaves: ‘then for them is half the punishment for free [unmarried] women.’ (*an-Nisa*: 25)

The text above refers to the legal punishment that is to be meted out to the free woman and the female slave. Thus, these scholars state, ‘The punishment of stoning (an adulteress) to death is not halved, but rather, what is halved is the punishment of lashing; the free woman is given 100 lashes, and the female slave is given 50 lashes, whereas the punishment of stoning to death is not halved’. In other words, there are different opinions concerning the exact meaning of the verse. Concerning this matter, we say: ‘It may be that their opinion is correct if Allah had stated: ‘then for them is half the punishment,’ and had not mentioned anything else. However, He stated right afterwards: ‘the punishment’. As we have stated previously, punishment is the causing of pain to a living entity, but the punishment of stoning someone causes their death. Therefore, the causing of pain to a living entity applies to the punishment meted out by lashes, whereas stoning leads to the taking of life, and does not merely punish in a manner causing pain.

This is further proved by the fact that the True Lord *Glorified is He* when speaking about Sulaiman’s (Solomon’s) hoopoe, related: ‘I will surely punish him with a severe punishment or slaughter him.’ (*an-Naml*: 21) Therefore, it means the punishment that does not lead to slaughter or killing.

In His statement: ‘and those who have disbelieved in the signs of their Lord’, Allah means: ‘They covered them up and repudiated and disavowed them’. Therefore, the signs are present, but they concealed them deliberately. In a similar manner, they disbelieved in Allah, or in other words, they concealed

the truth of His Existence. For covering or concealing something does not take place unless it exists in the first place; only then is it covered up.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْبَحْرَ لِتَجْرِيَ الْفُلُكُ فِيهِ بِأَمْرِهِ
وَلِنَبْنِغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۚ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

**It is God who subjected the sea for you — ships
sail on it by His command so that you can seek
His bounty and give Him thanks [12]
(The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 12)**

Subjection is for the purpose of service, and that the thing made subservient is at the disposal and service of the one for whom it is made subject. A few decades ago in Egypt, there used to be a system of law that was built upon slavery and subjugation, which is a system built upon workers who carry out their appointed tasks without any wages. The True Lord *Glorified is He* subjected the sea for us, and abased it so that it may serve us; if it were not for that, we would never have been able to embark upon it, nor traverse across it, nor gain any benefit from it whatsoever.

In relation to the subjection of the sea is what we know of the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when his mother cast him in the sea, carrying out the command of Allah: ‘when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear and do not grieve. Indeed, We will return him to you and will make him [one] of the messengers.’ (*al-Qasas*: 7)

Thus, the orders were issued to the sea to cast him upon the shore, and not to drown him within, as Allah *Glorified is He* stated: ‘and cast it into the river and the river will throw it onto the bank.’ (*Ta Ha*: 39)

Just as the True Lord *Glorified is He* commands rational human beings, He commands inanimate objects, which thereupon carry out His orders pliantly and obey Him. For this reason, He states about the Heavens: ‘And has responded to its Lord and was obligated [to do so].’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 2)

To make something subject to another means to forcibly burdening it with something that is compulsory. Thus, all the cosmos is made subject to Him. In other words, it obeys Him and carries out His commandments. It is from this

state of being subjected to His will that He has thereby subjugated the very limbs of a human being to him such that they follow his will and are respond to it in a manner that is spontaneous and smooth without any burden or trouble in the process.

The tongue articulates with the statement ‘There is no god (worthy of worship) except Allah’ merely by means of your having willed it and it states expressions of disbelief as well - May Allah save us from that - merely by our will. The case with the hand, the eye, and the leg is likewise, as is the case with every one of our limbs: none of them disobey your orders, being under your influence in a manner in which we do not truly know, for their Creator has made them subject to you, and has abased them so that they may serve you.

He stated to them: ‘Obey my servant, for I wish to call him to account after having given to him the choice of doing or not doing good or evil actions. Furthermore, if faith were something that were to be forcibly imposed upon the human being, I would have forced it upon him as I have done with the angels; however, I do not wish that these forms of creation submit and defer to me without any choice in the matter; rather, I want hearts that are reverently full of humility towards me; I want you, O mankind, to come to me in willing obedience, while having the capacity to turn away from me and escaping from me’.

It is for this reason that we say: ‘The sword is not used in Islam to force or coerce its doctrine upon a people, but rather, it is only used to protect their choice of belief and the doctrines that they have chosen for themselves’. Thereafter, though, the opponents of Islam announce pompously and loudly that Islam was forced upon people by the edge of the sword. This is not true, and the proof of this is the remaining of great numbers of non-Muslims in the lands of Islam upon their original beliefs, after having their lands taken over and ruled by the Muslims.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* made everything in existence subject to the use and service of humankind, He said in a Qudsi Hadith, ‘O son of Adam, I created things in existence for your use, and I created you for the purpose of serving Me, so do not be occupied with what is made for you in place of what you are made for.’⁽¹⁾ In other words, do not look to what are

(1) *This is related by Ahmad in his Musnad (2/358) from Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him: Allah stated: ‘O son of Adam, devote yourself exclusively to my worship and I will =*

effectively your slaves; rather, look towards Whom you yourself are a slave of, and towards Whom your master is.

This subjection of the limbs of man for his service is limited to the life of this world. As for the Hereafter, they will be set free from these fetters and will be unfastened from this forcible confinement and subjugation, for they used to be bound to the will of the servant of Allah, whereas in the Hereafter, the servant of Allah has no volition over them.

At that point, volition over everything will return to the Highest One Who Wills over and above everything else *Glorified is He*. There will be no obedience of the limbs to the human being, and no submission to his commands. All commands on that day will be for Allah alone: 'To whom belongs [all] sovereignty this Day? To Allah , the One, the Prevailing.' (*Ghafir*: 16)

For this reason, the various limbs and parts of the body will change in their function and become bearers of witness. They will bear witness to the truth in front of The One, The Alone. Thus, the tongue will say: 'I said such-and-such a thing'; the hand will say, 'I struck such-and-such a thing'; the leg will say, 'I went to such-and-such a place'; the eye will say, 'I saw such-and-such a thing' and so forth.

We have already likened this phenomenon with the leader of squadron who orders the soldiers, who obey him even if the order he gives is a mistaken or wrong one. Then, when they return to the chief leader, they will say, 'Our immediate leader told us to do such-and-such a thing, and we did not disobey his orders, for we were commanded to follow them even if they were wrong and based on poor judgment'.

So, when the True Lord *Glorified is He* made our various limbs and parts of the body subject to us, He did so only to give us an analogy and example of His complete, independent command over everything, and to show us that if

= *fill your heart with riches and abate your poverty, but if you do not, I shall fill your heart with worry and Will not abate your poverty.* It is also related by the author of *Al- Iqazh Al-Himam (Ibn `Ajiba) (1/247)*. These are some of the related stories about what Allah has stated that have come down to us. Ibn `Arabi also relates it in his *Al-Futuhat Al-Makkiyya* with the wording: 'Allah revealed in the Torah: "O son of Adam, I created things in the universe for your use, and I created you for My service, so do not forsake what was created for my service from what was created for your service."' "

He Wills for something to take place, He merely states: ‘Be!’ and it is. He states to those who are presumptuously arrogant: ‘Tell me, by Allah, what are the muscles that you employ that you may speak or stand up or sit down? What is the motion, the action that takes place inside such that you may act in any which manner that you wish? What nerves are the ones you use that participate in these motions?’ Indeed, you know nothing of them, nor do you consciously have any command over them; rather, merely on the basis of what you will, they follow your volition and obey you. Thus, if this is a gift of Allah to you, and a blessing from amongst His blessings upon you, how can you possibly deem the truth of what Allah relates to be farfetched and remote?

The first of the many phenomena that indicate the subjugation of the sea is that Allah made it suitable for the traversal of ships upon its surface, as He states: ‘And on that (very sea) one sees ships ploughing through the waves.’ (*an-Nahl*: 14)

The first ship that ever existed in the cosmos was the ark of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* which he constructed by the order of Allah, through His revelation of it to him, whereby He taught him how to construct it from planks and nails: ‘And We carried him on a [construction of] planks and nails.’ (*al-Qamar*: 13)

A ship does not travel upon the surface of the earth unless there is an abundance of causal laws to support such motion, which is exactly what its subjugation to mankind is. Firstly, the water must be liquid such that it flows easily in order to allow for the ship to sail smoothly when the wind blows upon it and sets it in motion. If the water were frozen or solid, no such motion would be possible.

Secondly, the water must be free of any kind of stickiness or glueyness. Thirdly, the density of the water must be more than the density of the ship, for if you were to take a lump of metal and throw it into the water, it would sink. However, if you were to forge the metal so as to make it broader and flatter, and expand its surface area, it would float.

Thus, from amongst the phenomena that indicate subjugation of the sea to Allah is that He has made it suitable for the coursing of ships upon it: ‘subjected to you the sea so that ships may sail upon it by His command.’

This is just as Allah states in another place in the Quran: 'In the name of Allah, be its run and its riding at anchor!' (*Hud*: 41)

Also, from amongst the indications of the subjugation of the sea to Allah is that He has made it a source of many different foods and wealth: 'and that you may seek of His bounty.' Thus, the bounty of Allah in the sea is immense. It has enough nourishment necessary for the preservation of life, and in it is luxury and adornment, such as pearls and corals and other precious objects, so much so that many have said: 'Indeed, the treasures in the depths of the seas are more than the treasures above the surface of the earth'.

After all this, the ships traverse over the surface of the water carrying you to various countries for the purpose of gaining wealth from all over the world.

In other verses, the True Lord *Glorified is He* has explained His statement: 'And it is He who subjected the sea for you to eat from it tender meat...' (*an-Nahl*: 14). These are various types of fish and seafood that are eaten: 'and to extract from it ornaments which you wear.' (*an-Nahl*: 14) What is meant here is pearls, corals and precious gems that are extracted from the depths of the sea. For this reason, the scholars have stated, 'Verily, the ornaments, and gems of the earth are not forbidden to use for wear. Even though they are more precious than gold, there is no text that indicates their prohibition for men, as there has been in the case of the wearing of gold.'⁽¹⁾ Why is this? This is because gold is used as coinage, by which human beings interact with each other in financial transactions in the form of coinage of various currencies, pounds and so forth. Thus, at its origin, it is to be used for financial transactions between people, and is a means by which production and consumption are linked together and take place, whereas the precious ornaments of the sea are not used for this purpose.

In His statement: 'and perhaps you will be grateful', He has ordered His servants to give thanks for His blessings. So, whenever you see one of the manifestations of the blessings of Allah, say, 'All Praise is to Allah', and acknowledge the bounty of Allah to Him. It is due to this that the Prophet

(1) *This is related by Abu Dawud in his Sunnan (2535) and by An-Nasa'i in his Sunnan (5053), and by Ibn Majah in his Sunnan (3585) and Ahmad in his Musnad (711, 891) from 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb Allah be pleased with him.*

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us the special prayer to be used for boarding ships and other vehicles, as follows: ‘Limitless in His Glory is He who has made all this subservient to our use – since but for Him, we would not have been able to attain to it. Hence, verily, it is unto our Lord that we must always turn.’⁽¹⁾

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِّنْهُ إِنَّ
فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

**He has subjected all that is in the heavens and the
earth for your benefit, as a gift from Him. There
truly are signs in this for those who reflect [13]
(The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 13)**

The True Lord *Glorified is He* now shifts our attention from the subjugation of the sea to the subjugation of the Heavens and the earth, for they have also been made subject to mankind since the time that Allah created them. However, human beings did not know the various manners in which they were made subject to them all at once, but rather, they came to know about them through the passage of time and the advancement and development of the various sciences.

This is similar to when Allah *Glorified is He* states: ‘We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?’ (*Fussilat*: 53)

Thus, for example, when you read His statement *Glorified is He* concerning the ships of the sea: ‘And to Him belong the ships [with sails] elevated in the sea like mountains’ (*ar-Rahman*: 24), you are bound to use your intellect and

(1) This is related by Muslim in his *Sahih* (1343), in the Book of Pilgrimage, from the Hadith of Ibn `Umar Allah be pleased with him who related: ‘Whenever the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him would mount his camel in leaving for a voyage, he would say, “Allah Akbar” three times, and then say, “Limitless in His Glory is He who has made all this subservient to our use – since but for Him, we would not have been able to attain it. Hence, verily, it is unto our Lord that we must always turn.”’ Ahmad similarly relates this Hadith in his *Musnad* (2/144).

ask yourself, as we have asked: when did humankind know about multi-decked ships that are raised up above the sea?

Humankind learned of multi-decked ships in the last decades of the eighteenth century, for before that, the deck of a ship was like a plain surface upon which nothing else rested. So, who informed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that some of the ships would be very high and lofty like mountains? Similar to this is His statement *Glorified is He*: ‘And if it were not that the people would become one community [of disbelievers], We would have made for those who disbelieve in the Most Merciful - for their houses - ceilings and elevators of silver upon which to mount.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 33)

Modern civilization had no knowledge of elevators except in the latter part of the twentieth century. Therefore, this is one of the manifestations of the wondrous inimitability of the Quran and its truthfulness, and the truthfulness of the one who conveyed the Quran to us. Thus, Allah and His Messenger have spoken the truth.

All of this indicates that these new inventions were present in the Knowledge of Allah *Glorified is He* and had a specific form, just like a model of something before its actual construction, before they ever occurred to the intellects of human beings. Allah manifests them to His servants according to their needs and with the passage of time and the advancement and development of the various sciences, and this is the meaning of the verse:

Concerning His statement *Glorified is He*: ‘And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth’, we have said: ‘Everything that is in the Heavens and the earth is a vessel and container of many other things, some of which we know, and others of which we have not attained any knowledge of until now’. Thus, we observe the Heavens as something of great elevation and altitude for us, and we do not see any of the creation of Allah in it except for the sun and the moon, the stars and the clouds. And this is only the Heavens of this earthly realm. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* states: ‘And We adorned the skies nearest to the earth with lights.’ (*Fussilat*: 12)

As for the Seven Heavens, that is something of an entirely different order of reality, something we have no knowledge about whatsoever.

It is enough for you to know that between you and the sun are 8 light-minutes of distance, and that there are things that have been created that are at a distance of 100 light years distance from you: calculate that distance by multiplying it by 365 days, then by 24 hours, then by 60 seconds, and then by the speed of light, and you will understand how little we know.

Therefore, there is an entire order of universe beyond what you can possibly imagine or conceive. For this reason, Allah states *Glorified is He*: ‘And the heaven We constructed with strength, and indeed, We are [its] expander.’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 47)

It is enough for you, in terms of how the cosmos has been subjected for your use, to consider the sun, and how its creator has made it subject to you such that it gives you light, warmth, energy, and different types of rays, without you having to expend any effort for it whatsoever, and without any maintenance, any fuel, and without you even having to reach it in the first place.

Thus, it operates in service for you and has done so since the time that Allah created it, and it will continue to do so until the coming of the Last Hour; it does not require anything from you at all. You only need to benefit from it, and contemplate its nature and the manner in which it can be exploited for your own use and benefit. So is the moon, it gives you light that is gentle and tranquil, and by it we are guided in the darkness and depths of the night: ‘And landmarks. And by the stars they are [also] guided.’ (*an-Nahl*: 16)

So, Allah created the moon and sun, with the specific quality of movement. Both are in motion and have been in motion since the time Allah created them, and will continue to do so until the coming of the Last Hour. They move without any fuel and without any energy, operating by the law of inertia, as we have said. As we have said previously, this motion takes place by means of precise and finely attuned calculation: ‘The sun and the moon are made punctual.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 5)

The earth, as well, is a container and a vessel for many different kinds of things and species of all varieties. In it are inanimate objects, which constitute the lowest level of species; if you add the quality or character of development and growth, we have plant life; and if you add the quality of sensation and feeling, you have animate life; and if you add the capacity and faculty of

intelligence, we have human life, and this is the highest of all these species, and the most noble to Allah.

For this reason, Allah has made subject to man all the other species and made them at his disposal and for his use. He has made man their overlord, and thereby, His representative in His earth.

So, when the True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks of inanimate objects, He states: 'Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky, and We produce thereby fruits of varying colours? And in the mountains are tracts, white and red of varying shades and [some] extremely black.' (*Fatir*: 27)

Thus, He presented the fruits first which are from plant life, before mentioning inanimate life because we do not consume inanimate life, but rather, we eat plant life, and fruits are the outcome and produce of such life. They are the most important to us, and they constitute the fundamental elements of life.

Thereafter, He speaks of the mountains which are the source of many benefits, treasures, metals, and precious gems. For this reason, He states in another verse: 'And He placed on the earth firmly set mountains over its surface, and He blessed it and determined therein its [creatures'] sustenance.' (*Fussilat*: 10) In other words, these blessings are to be found within the mountains. Now we have already made clear that the mountains are sources of nourishment, and serve as its storehouses in the earth. This is so because it is a source of rich, fertilizing soil that flows with the rainwater and spreads across the ends of the earth. By such mean, the fertility of the earth increases: 'And there is not a thing but that with Us are its depositories, and We do not send it down except according to a known measure.' (*al-Hijr*: 21)

Thus, in every species of creation, there are signs. Consider inanimate material, for example, such as the mountains and what they possess of benefit and various colours and hues of all kinds: within, one finds marble, granite, alabaster, and other useful material. Furthermore, plant life represents the essential source of nourishment. Think, for example, of the Arab date palms, and compare them with the European palm trees. For us, the date palm is a source of nourishment and we make use of every part of it, and we never throw away anything from it whatsoever.

Thus, you find that they have bark that serve as steps which you can use to ascend the trees and prune their branches or gather their fruits. As for the European palm trees, they are only for adornment. For this reason, you find them sleek, smooth, and thus hard to climb. This is for a special wisdom of the Creator, and a manifestation of His precision in creation. All praise be to Allah, the Best of Creators!

Contemplate the stalks of the palm trees: you will find them broad at their origins, and slender and delicate at their ends, and the leaves that are upon them are the opposite, for they are even and flat, spreading out at their tips. Then, they start to curl into themselves until they become spines at the base of the palm-stalks, close to where the fruit is, and this is so because these spines protect the fruits from rats and mice. Then contemplate the fact that these spines end at the base of the palm-stalks, and do not extend to the fruit-clustering stalks that bear the actual fruit.

Now contemplate the trunk of the date palm; it is tall and upright, as opposed to other trees, which you will find to be short and branching out. This is so because the fruits upon them are small in size, and it is easy for the branches to bear them. As for other plants like the watermelon, for example, they are found on finely coiled stalks that extend along the earth, and this is because it is such a heavy fruit.

Therefore, the phenomenon of the power of Allah being manifested in the cosmos is not something mechanical. If you consider the food you eat, you will notice that you eat the skin of the apricot, and leave aside the pit, unlike the almond, where you eat the nut and leave aside the shell. This is from the Power, the Great Wisdom, and the facility with which the Creator *Glorified is He* manifests Himself. You eat everything of the fig, for example, which does not have an outer skin. As for the orange or the tangerine, it has an outer peel. Contemplate, then, the different colours and flavours of the various edible plants and fruits, all of which are watered by the same source of water, and say: Glory be to the Creator!

Contemplate the trees: we find some from amongst them that are green which have no fruit, and you deem them to be of no benefit. However, there must necessarily be some benefit in them, either for you yourself or for

something else in creation. It is enough that they serve as adornment and beautify their surroundings, and serve as a source of oxygen, and perhaps they have many other benefits of which you are not aware. You find, for example, trees that have flowers of various shapes, beautiful colours, and smell.

This is a whole other world of aesthetically wondrous creation of the natural world. For all the various colours and fragrances, there is a Divine wisdom in their presence, for they attract butterflies and insects that carry out the process of pollination for plant life. For every kind of butterfly and insect has its own blend of colours and smell. For this reason, when the insecticides started to become widespread, this phenomenon started to decrease, and we no longer saw any flowers in the fields. Why is this so? This is because the insecticides killed off the butterflies that carry out the process of pollination.

When you see all this beauty in creation, you should invoke the Creator and say: 'All Praise be to Allah, the Best of Creators'! Furthermore, what is more beautiful than the beauty in creation is the One Who created this beauty.

Now in the verse, He states: 'all from Him'; the word 'all' is used to indicate everything that is in the Heavens and the earth of the creation of Allah, without exception. Therefore, everything that is small or large in creation, from the atom to the galaxy, is from the bounty of Allah, those that we know of, and those that our limited knowledge cannot possibly encompass.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* states: 'Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.' In other words, these created things that have been subject to you are wonders and indications people who give thought.

Thus, this is a call to faith, for the True Lord *Glorified is He* presents His creation and his marvellous works in the cosmos to us, and calls us to contemplate them and employ our intellects in considering their nature. Furthermore, The Fashioner and Creator would not do this with his created works unless He were certain and absolutely sure of their excellence.

We have stated previously that if you were to go to a seller of fabric and buy a suit of wool from him, for example, you would see him present you various garments of fabric and make clear to their high level of quality. Then he would take a twist of the fabric and light it on fire in order to demonstrate

to you the reality of its high quality. He does this only to demonstrate his trustworthiness to you, concerning the goods that he is selling. As for the seller of corrupted goods that have been debased or adulterated, he will chatter and prattle to you, and try to make you believe him with false words, deceit, and lies. He will never dare to make the defects of his goods clear to you.

Therefore, when your Lord addresses you, try to comprehend, reflect, and bear in mind thoughtfully what He is saying. What this means is that if you were to use your faculty of intelligence and consider this verse carefully and think about it deeply, it would lead you to the truth and to what He wishes from you. For this reason, the True Lord warns His servants against turning away from His signs: ‘And how many a sign within the heavens and earth do they pass over while they, therefrom, are turning away.’ (*Yusuf*: 105)

Then, The True Lord *Glorified is He* states: ⁽¹⁾

قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا يَغْفِرُوا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ أَيَّامَ
اللَّهِ لِيَجْزِيَ قَوْمًا بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

**Tell the believers to forgive those who do not fear God's
days [of punishment] — He will requite people for what they
have done [14] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 14)**

The word ‘Tell’ indicates the precision which the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* employed in his delivery of what he received from Allah, and that He does not come with anything from himself and nor relate

(1) *Reasons behind the revelation of the verse: Ibn `Abbas stated, in a relation from `Ata`:* He intended the verse particularly for `Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him and He intended `Abdullah ibn `Ubay in mentioning ‘those who do not believe in the coming of the Days of Allah.’ This is because they stopped in the Battle of Banu Mustaliq at the well-called Al-Muraysi. `Abdullah sent his servant to bring water, but then was late in returning, and so when he finally came back to him; he asked him, ‘What kept you?’ The servant replied, ‘The servant of `Umar waylaid everyone else at the rim of the well, and did not let anyone draw any water until he filled the water skins of the Prophet, the waterskins of the Abu Bakr and then he filled up water for his master. `Abdullah replied, ‘There is nothing that is similar between us and them except what has been said by someone: “Fatten your dog, and it will devour you.”’ The news of this statement reached `Umar Allah be pleased with him who took up his sword, wanting to head towards him, when Allah revealed this verse. *Asbab An-Nuzul, Al-Waqidi* (p. 215)

the Words of Allah by their general import, but rather, he conveys the revelation literally, word for word. If this were not the case, it would be possible for him to relate to people that 'Allah is One' when Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the following verse to him: 'Say, "He is The One Allah"' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1).

Now when you send your son to his uncle, for example, and tell him: 'Tell your uncle: 'My father wishes to see you'', and your son goes to him and tells his uncle: 'My father wishes to see you', the general meaning of what you intended is conveyed, and the expression is complete without resorting to repeating the word 'Tell'.

As for the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he relates exactly what Allah relates to him. He does not interfere in relating the text of what has been revealed to him and cast in to his heart, as if he were to say to us: 'This is the Word of Allah; it is not from myself at all, but rather, is the very Speech of Allah'. Thus, he relates what is revealed to him exactly as he hears it.

It is eccentric that there are some people who call for removing this word from the Quranic manuscripts and allege that it does not add anything to the meaning at all. Refuting their claim, it is enough to know that Allah *the Most High* and then Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* mentioned it. Moreover, it has a specific role to play, as previously elucidated.

Allah's saying: 'Tell the believers to forgive...' (*al-Jathīya*: 14) means that the believers should pardon and pass over the trivial speech of disbelievers as long as their words do not exceed the bounds of speech to the realm of action.

The verse: '...Those who do not fear Allah's days [of punishment]...' (*al-Jathīya*: 14) refers to those people who do not take account of Allah's days. Being eager for the best is a kind of request and bears the idea of wishful and wistful desire for achieving it; thus, it refers to attainability and reasonable expectations of realising hope. Though, the meaning of impossible request is quite different; it refers to the unattainable wish, such as that mentioned by the poet laureate :⁽¹⁾

(1) The poet is Abu Al-'Atahīyya, (Ismail ibn Al-Qasim), born near Kufa in the year 130 A.H. and lived in Baghdad. He used to excel in poems on abstinence and eulogies. He used to sell jars of earthenware, and then reached the courts of the caliphs where he reached an elevated position. He died in Baghdad in 211 A.H., from *Al-Mawsu'a Ash-Shi'riyya*.

I wish the flush of youth could return for a single day

I would inform it of what old age brought along its way⁽¹⁾

As for hopefulness, it refers to reasonably expected attainable action, as it is said, 'I hope to succeed' or 'I hope to travel'.

The reference of the verse: '...Allah's days [of punishment]...' (*al-Jathiya*: 14) is similar to that in the saying 'the days of the Arabs' which refers to the historic significant days of the Arabs, when their great events and occurrences took place. Thus, 'the Days of Allah' refers to the historic days of the Muslims in which they won victory over their enemies. As for the Muslims, they are days of victory; whereas, they are days of defeat for the disbelievers. As a consequence, the disbelievers who do not take admonition from these great events, but rather, who pass over them as if nothing happened or as if they were completely ignorant, are the hypocrites. This verse has a related story; in the Battle of Banu-Mustaliq,⁽²⁾ there was a water well called Al-Muraysi, where both the servant of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* and the servant of 'Abdullah ibn Ubay, the chief of the hypocrites gathered to get water. The servant of 'Umar prevented the other from getting water from the well and said, 'You would not get water until I would have gotten water for Prophet Muhammad first.' Eventually, the other asked, 'Have you finished?' The servant of 'Umar replied, 'Not yet, there is still a bucket of water for Abu Bakr, and then one for 'Umar.' The narrator of the story relates that the servant of 'Umar did this due to his knowledge that 'Abdullah ibn Ubay is a hypocrite. As a result, the servant of Abdullah ibn Ubay was late in getting water, so 'Abdullah asked him, 'Why are you late?' Thereupon, the servant replied, 'The servant of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab did such-and-such.' In response, 'Abdullah nodded his head hypocritically and said: 'Indeed, we are a typical example of the saying: "Fatten your dog and it will devour you."' He said this to satisfy his ego, yet his saying reached 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* who took up his sword to kill him, but Allah revealed this

(1) It is a 4-verse *Wafir*-metre ode.

(2) *This story has been related by Wahidi An-Naysaburi in Asbab An-Nuzul [al-Jathiya chapter, verse No. 14]. He has also referred to in Nawasikh Al-Quran (1/225) and said, 'It is related by 'Ata' on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas.*

verse: 'Tell the believers to forgive those who do not fear Allah's days [of punishment]...' (*al-Jathiya*: 14).

Allah commands the believers to forgive and pass over any slipup uttered which is still merely within the framework of speech, and does not reach the level of deeds. However, in case it does, this would be a different matter altogether, as in the case of the Muslim woman with the tribe of Banu Qaynuqa', when a Jew from Banu Qaynuqa' raised up her garment and her nakedness was exposed. In this case, there should necessarily be a punitive measure against their bad deed.⁽¹⁾

As for mere words, there is no problem with showing forbearance for these hypocrites. It is sufficient to know that the hypocrite debases himself through hypocrisy because he does in public what he does not hold to be true or does not believe in. Furthermore, hypocrisy, in itself, refers to the strong faith faced by hypocrisy. This shows the strength and nobility of faith and the debasement of hypocrisy.

Thus, the Quran relates their saying: 'they say, "Once we return to Medina the powerful will drive out the weak..."' (*al-Munafiqun*: 8). Allah confirms their saying that the powerful will drive out the weak; however, who is the powerful and who is the weak? In this context, Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...But power belongs to Allah, to His Messenger, and to the believers...' (*al-Munafiqun*: 8).

It is sufficiently humiliating that these hypocrites actually attended the prayers in the very first row in order to hide their hypocrisy. Accordingly, there is a deep contradiction and wavering within their hearts which refers to

(1) This is related by Al-Waqidi in *Al-Maghazi* (1/65), the chapter of 'The Battle of Qaynuqa'' where he said, 'A woman who had fled from the Arabs came to the market of Banu Qaynuqa' with a man from the Ansar, and sat down near a jeweller who had some jewellery for her. There came a man from the Jews of Banu Qaynuqa', who sat down secretly behind her, and raised the hem of her garment up to her back, attaching it with a thorn. When the woman stood up, some of her nakedness appeared, and everyone laughed and jeered at her. In response, a man from the Muslims rose, followed the Jew and killed him, upon which the tribe of Banu Qaynuqa' gathered in around him and then killed him in retaliation. Thereby, they breached the covenant they had made with Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him.'

the consciousness of their own debasement. It is related that when Allah revealed His saying: ‘Who will give Allah a good loan...’ (*al-Baqara*: 245), Fanhas,⁽¹⁾ the Jew, laughed and said, ‘The Lord of Muhammad is in need and asks us to lend Him.’ He uttered this in order to satisfy his ego; yet, he was still fighting in every battle to the side of Muslims and performed the prayers in the first row.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* commands the believers to forgive the hypocrites so that the hypocrites are involuntary conscious of their own debasement. Hence, orientalist stirred up a big commotion concerning Allah’s saying: ‘When the hypocrites come to you [Prophet], they say, “We bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah.” Allah knows that you truly are His Messenger...’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 1). They exclaimed how Allah declares just afterwards: ‘...And He bears witness that the hypocrites are liars’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 1). There is a difference between the saying and the content of the saying itself. Thus, they are speaking the truth vis-à-vis the content of their saying: ‘...“We bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah...”’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 1). However, they are lying in their saying because they are hypocrites.

Allah *Glorified is He* does not say they are lying in their saying that you are Allah’s Messenger; but rather, He denies their saying: ‘...We bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah...’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 1). Bearing witness means that the heart agrees with the utterances of the tongue; whereas, the utterances and the actions of the hypocrite are worlds apart.

Thus, Allah’s saying: ‘...Allah’s days [of punishment...]’ (*al-Jathiya*: 14) refers to the days of famous events of victory, bringing gladness and causing

(1) *Fanhas was one of the scholars and rabbis of the Jews. Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him had already met with him, saying to him, “Woe to you, O Fanhas! Fear Allah and accept Islam! For by Allah, indeed you know well that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and that he has come with the truth from Allah, and that you have found mention of him written in your scriptures of the Torah and the Evangel.” Fanhas replied, ‘By Allah, O Abu Bakr, we have nothing of poverty from Allah with us, but verily, He is the one who is poor in our eyes. And we do not abase ourselves before Him the way He Abases Himself before us, and verily we are those of wealth when compared with Him, and if He were truly richer and wealthier than us, He would not have asked us for a loan, as your companion claims (referring to the following Quranic verse): “Who will give Allah a good loan...”’ (al-Baqara: 245). See Tafsir At-Tabari for reference.*

the Muslims to rejoice in Islamic history; such as the Battle of Badr, the Battle of Uhud and the Day of Hudaibiya. Meanwhile, they refer to the days of defeat for the disbelievers, grieving their hearts and troubling their lives. Likewise, these days resemble the great retributive events that took place to those nations who denied previous messengers.

Those hypocrites do not fear or take warning from such retributive events. Hence, they did not turn away from violent disputation, argumentation, and stubborn opposition. This is fully elucidated in Allah's saying: 'And We punished each one of them for their sins: some We struck with a violent storm; some were overcome by a sudden blast; some We made the earth swallow; and some We drowned....' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40) Then Allah says to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: '...He will requite people for what they have done' (*al-Jathiya*: 14). Allah *the Almighty* tells His Messenger to leave their requital to Him! Allah's Command to forgive those hypocrites is not to honour or respect them, nor to show mercy to them; but rather, it is to bring down a severer punishment upon them by means of His Might. So, leave them to Allah to take His vengeance, for they are not actually challenging you, but rather, they are opposing Allah *Glorified is He*.

Furthermore, it should be noted that forgiveness has basic principles and certain limits. The man may recurrently forgive someone who does persistent evil, yet he may only find in return violent disputation and rejection. In the face of such evil, one must necessarily turn from showing clemency and mildness to outrage, for it is more beneficial and appropriate in this situation. The famous Arab poet laureate⁽¹⁾ has discerned this and said:

It is intelligent to demonstrate outrage to the delinquent⁽²⁾

If shown leniency, the roads of evil are long-drawn-out

(1) Ahmad ibn Al-Hassan Abu At-Tayyib Al-Mutanabbi, born in 202 A.H. He is a sage poet and one of the most distinguished Arab poets and literature laureate to whom many proverbs are attributed. He was born in a small locale called Kinda, to which he is related. He grew up in the Levant, and thereafter, wandered the country in search of knowledge of Arabic, poetry, and literature in general. At one time, he pretended to be a prophet in the countryside of Samara. He passed away in 354 A.H.

(2) It is the ninth line of a 36-verse *Tawil*-Meter ode of Mutanabbi

Another poet⁽¹⁾ has said:

We pardoned the tribe of Banu Dhuhl

And exclaimed, 'These people are brethren:

Mayhap those days will return

When they were as once they had been.'

But when evil announced itself openly,

Naked, brash, unmistakably,

We marched like lions striding boldly,

Newly become most wrathful

At them we struck hard, enfeebling,

Weakening, retaliating equally⁽²⁾

And stabbing, like the piercing of openings

Of wineskins⁽³⁾ distended with plenty

Showing clemency, submissively, when confronted

With outrage is grovelling compliance

Showing outrage brings succour and safety

When good conduct cannot grant deliverance⁽⁴⁾.

Regarding Allah's saying: '...He will requite people for what they have done (*yaksibun*)' (*al-Jathiya*: 14), as previously mentioned, it is clear that

(1) He is the towering figure of his age, Shahl ibn Shayban, one of the poets of pre-Islamic Arabic Peninsula, from the people of Yamama. He was called 'the towering mountain' for the greatness of his works, which were likened to the mountain. He died approximately 70 years before *Hijra*, cited in *Al-A'lam* for Az-Zirikli.

(2) 'Equally or in equal measure': a man's match in strength. This verse is related in some sources:

At them we struck hard, enfeebling,

Slaughtering, Retaliating equally

(3) 'Wineskin (*az-ziqq*): any vessel that is used for drink. To 'slough off (*tazqiq* – from the same root word) a wineskin' is to strip it open from its top. *Lisan Al-'Arab*

(4) *These verses are related by Abu 'Ali Al-Qali in his work 'Al-Amali' (1/309-310).*

yaksibun (have done or have gained) is used to refer to good deeds, whereas *yaktasibun* 'have earned' is used to refer to evil deeds because it involves falsification and fabrication of lies. So, good deeds proceed from the doer who commits them naturally, and do not contain any affectation in them. Moreover, the term *yaksibun* 'have gained' originally means the increase in the sale price of something from the price of its procurement, a praiseworthy action, as it stimulates lawful and healthy business enterprise.

However, the human being may become accustomed and habituated to committing sins and does not distance himself from perpetrating them. They may become so natural, and thus, for him, it is an instance of being proud of 'gaining' evil deeds. In other words, he does not repent of his actions, nor does he upbraid himself for them, but rather he is pleased by bad deeds and considers them as good ones being 'gained'. For this reason, Allah does not say *yaktasibun* 'what they earned', but rather, He *the Almighty* says, '...He will requite people for what they have done (*yaksibun*)' (*al-Jathiya*: 14). Thus, Allah *the Almighty* commands the believers to forgive minor faults, for the perpetrator may refrain from his wrong action. Allah *the Exalted* says, '...[Prophet], repel evil with what is better and your enemy will become as close as an old and valued friend' (*Fussilat*: 34).

Consequently, Allah, the Wise Legislator has taken every measure to ensure that the bonds between people would remain well preserved. Even in the most violent campaigns against the enemies, which involves taking life, He allows for retaliatory penalties to be exacted as follows: 'Fair retribution saves life for you, people of understanding...' (*al-Baqara*: 179). Meanwhile, He calls for forgiveness: '...But if the culprit is pardoned by his aggrieved brother, this shall be adhered to fairly, and the culprit shall pay what is due in a good way...' (*al-Baqara*: 178). The word 'brother', despite being enemies, refers to their dealing in brotherly way.

There are many people who alleged that they have repelled evil with what was better, yet they did not find the desired result of which Allah has informed them. Their claim is refuted that they did not respond with what was better. If they had, they would have found their desired outcome, just as Allah has informed them; however, they fancied that they did, and they treated the

situation as something experimental whose results would be judged thereafter, instead of having certainty in Allah's promise.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* elevates this humane act higher than mere forgiveness; for someone may forgive the other who does evil towards him, but there remains some despise in his heart. Thus, Allah *the Exalted* calls the believer to release himself from the effects of such offences, and then moves onwards to a higher level, which is to do good to the one who has done evil towards him: '...Those who restrain their anger and pardon people — Allah loves those who do good' (*Al-Imran*: 134).

Al-Hassan Al-Basri⁽¹⁾ was once asked about this matter, to which he responded, 'The evildoer deserves to be requited because Allah is by the side of the aggrieved; thereafter, the good deeds of the former get transferred to the latter.'

For this reason, when a man knew that a man had insulted him in a gathering, he sent him a plate of fresh dates as a gift and told his servant, 'Go with this to so-and-so, and tell him, "My master presents this gift to you, for you granted him your good deeds yesterday."'

Likewise, in our everyday life, when a child hits his brother; the father sympathises with the aggrieved one, whereas he angrily reproaches the sinner who hit the other, and upbraids him for his behaviour. Thus, the strike against the aggrieved child became in his favour and to his advantage.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* desires that all His creation would display compassion towards each other; this signifies that life is not built upon hatred, rancour, or stubborn resistance against others, but rather, upon love, affection, and mutual support.


As the scholars of Islam tackled this matter, they classified the tribulations that afflicted man into two categories; the first is that which afflicts man,

(1) Al-Hassan ibn Yasar Al-Basri Abu Said is one of the *Tabi'in*, those pious followers who came after the generation of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He was the Imam of the people of Basra and a great religious scholar and authority of Muslims of his time. He was one of the great scholars and legal authorities and one of the most widely known for his great piety. He was born in Medina in 21 A.H. and grew up in his early years under the wing of 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him*. He passed away in 110 A.H. at the age of 90.

where he has an adversary or an offending party. This type is harder on the self, for it summons man to vengeance. The second is the tribulation that afflicts man, where there is no adversary involved. This type is driven by Allah, in which man has no part. This tribulation is easier for man, as there is no offending human party involved. In case there is, by very nature, it stirs in man his perpetual desire for revenge.

For this reason, Luqman *peace be upon him* advises his son: ‘...Bear anything that happens to you steadfastly: these are things to be aspired to’ (*Luqman*: 17). The verse refers here to the tribulation driven by Allah, therefore, there is no mention of forgiveness or overlooking faults in it whereas, when Allah refers to the tribulation caused due to others, He says, ‘...This is one of the greatest things’ (*ash-Shura*: 43). The above verse is strengthened in its confirmation that forgiveness and forbearance for the offender in this situation is much more difficult and requires greater effort and struggle than in the first case.

In the conclusion of the concerned verse, Allah says, ‘...He will requite people for what they have done’ (*al-Jathiya*: 14), where He *the Almighty* indicates the justice of the requital that will be in accordance with the kind of action performed in this life. Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies further this point in the subsequent verse:


 مَنْ عَمِلْ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ

**Whoever does good benefits himself, and whoever does evil
 harms himself: you will all be returned to your Lord [15]
 (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 15)**

Thus, the man benefits himself with regards to righteous action; whereas, any evil that he perpetrates is against his own self. Afterwards, as Allah says: ‘...You will all be returned to your Lord’ (*al-Jathiya*: 15). This indicates that both the recompense for right action as well as the punishment for wrong action begins in this life before the person returns to Allah in the Hereafter. This is done to balance the equilibrium of the activity of life upon earth, for if all recompenses were delayed until the Hereafter, people would deem it easy to commit sin and would not care for falling into it. Accordingly, the situation would deteriorate and evil deeds would increase.

Therefore, there must be some earthly punishment that takes place in the world in order to set affairs right within it, so Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Another punishment awaits the evildoers...’ (*at-Tur*: 47). Furthermore, Allah says about the evildoers: ‘We shall certainly make them taste a nearer torment [in this life]...’ (*as-Sajda*: 21) which is followed by the punishment that takes place in the Hereafter: ‘...Prior to the greater torment so that perhaps they may return [to the right path]’ (*as-Sajda*: 21).

This principle is clear in the chapter of *al-Kahf*, as Allah *the Almighty* mentions the saying of Dhu Al-Qarnayn: ‘...We shall punish those who have done evil, and when they are returned to their Lord He will punish them [even more] severely’⁽¹⁾ (*al-Kahf*: 87).

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ وَزَكَّيْنَهُمْ
مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

**We gave scripture, wisdom, and prophet hood to the
Children of Israel; We provided them with good things and
favoured them above others [16] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 16)**

This is meant as a consolation for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* at a time when he endured the most painful sufferings and tribulations from the contemporary leaders of disbelief. They opposed him with stubbornness, denial, arrogance and much harm, in word and deed as well as by means of plots and conspiracies. They spared no effort to harm the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Thus, Allah *the Exalted* consoles and tells him that he is not the first messenger who experienced this; many of past prophetic brethren faced similar hardships and denial. So, Allah gives him consolation from the history of previous prophets who called people to faith and truth; whereas, the people, in return, desire falsehood; thus, they will necessarily clash against the prophets.

(1) Qatada related that the punishment of Dhu Al-Qarnayn for anyone who associated others with Allah in worship was execution. It was related on the authority of As-Suddi: ‘His punishment was to put them in brass cauldrons and set them on fire until they boiled to death.’ This was certainly a gruesome and terrible punishment. See *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur of As-Suyuti and the commentary of al-Kahf*, verse 87.

Allah *the Exalted* says, 'We gave scripture, wisdom, and prophet hood to the children of Israel...' (*al-Jathiya*: 16). In other words, Allah gave the Torah to the people of Israel, just as He revealed unto Muslims the Quran. Additionally, Allah provides the people of Israel with the standards of justice, by which their affairs were settled so that they may run smoothly. These standards of justice for the people of Israel are like the Prophetic *Sunnah* for Muslims. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* commands the wives of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as follows: 'Remember what is recited in your houses of Allah's revelations and wisdom...' (*al-Ahzab*: 34). In other words, Allah addresses the wives of the Prophet to remember what is recited in their houses from the Quran and Hadith.

Allah's saying: '...And prophet hood...' (*al-Jathiya*: 16) refers to Allah's sending many prophets to the people of Israel more than to any other nation, to the extent that they pride themselves over other nations in this concern. However, the reality is that this is not something to be proud of; but rather, this indicates their disgraced state for which they deserve to be reproached, for the great numbers of prophets indicates their corrupted state. Thus, the people have no need of a new messenger unless they have entered a deteriorated and corrupted state.

Therefore, the great number of prophets is not a point in their favour, but rather, it is a proof against them. They frequently carried out the killing of prophets, the matter which did not take place in any nation before them. Likewise, the disbelievers of Quraysh similarly plotted to kill Muhammad as well, yet how far their plans were from being realised! Allah *the Almighty* clarifies that the possibility of killing the prophets is confined to them only, so He attributes this specific transgression to them alone, as He says, '...Why did you kill Allah's prophets in the past...?' (*al-Baqara*: 91) These deeds were used to be of the previous people; as for present, no people are currently able to do any similar transgression against Prophet Muhammad.

Afterwards, Allah *the Exalted* says, '...We provided them with good things...' (*al-Jathiya*: 16). Among these good things are manna and quail that Allah sent down to them during the period of being wandered in the earth, when they had no rest, nor any cultivation from the earth. Manna is a kind of fluid

that resembles honey that runs along the leaves of trees, that turns into translucent grains and that fall down early in the morning. It has a sweet taste, as if it is a blend of honey and cream. As for quail, it is a migratory bird abounding in protein. Thus, with manna and quail, Allah *Glorified is He* granted them a complete, wholesome meal, yet their materialist inclinations overwhelmed them. They wished to eat from their cultivation from the land they were in possession of, saying: ‘Maybe this fully prepared meal will not come one day; thus, *manna* and quail may not descend from the Heavens’.

Accordingly, they asked Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*: ‘...We cannot bear to eat only one kind of food, so pray to your Lord to bring out for us some of the earth’s produce, its herbs and cucumbers, its garlic, lentils, and onions...’ (*al-Baqara*: 61). However, their materialism reached its maximum limit so that they requested Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to have a sensory vision of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...we will not believe you until we see Allah face to face...’ (*al-Baqara*: 55).

Then Allah says, ‘...and favoured them above others’ (*al-Jathiya*: 16). The scholars have stated: ‘They were merely favoured above other nations that were contemporaneous with them, not above all absolute nations. The People of Israel lived in a time when disbelief and idol-worship had taken reign, whereas they themselves were people of the Book, believing in Allah. Hence, they were better than all the other nations of their time.

وَأَتَيْنَهُمْ بَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا
يَنَّهُمْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

We gave them clear proof in matters [of religion]. They differed among themselves out of mutual rivalry, only after knowledge came to them: on the Day of Resurrection your Lord will judge between them regarding their differences [17]
(The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 17)

Someone may ask about the occasion for mentioning the Jews here. The Quranic commentators said that Allah *the Almighty* tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that the Quraysh and other people, have some

demerits of the Jews. They have done many analogous deeds, so Allah sent down upon them similar tribulations, to what was sent down beforehand upon those previous nations.

Allah *the Exalted* says, 'Can they not see that We have made [them] a secure sanctuary though all around them people are snatched away' (*al-'Ankabut*: 67). In those days, anyone who merely left the environs of Mecca, would be accosted, abducted, taken unawares and his wealth and possessions would be seized by bandits. However, the people of Mecca themselves could not dare do such acts, due to their high status related to their possession of *Ka'ba*, the House of Allah, and their fervent desire to maintain the safety of trade caravans travelling between Yemen and the Levant and passing by the territories of other Arab tribes.

Moreover, the service of the Quraysh to the visitors of the *Ka'ba* as being the guests of Allah, the All-Merciful, also ensured their trade and protected their caravans. Thus, this matter serves as the connection between the chapters of *al-Fil* and *Quraysh*. Allah *the Almighty* says in *al-Fil*: 'Do you [Prophet] not see how your Lord dealt with the army of the elephant? Did He not utterly confound their plans? He sent ranks of birds against them, pelting them with pellets of hard-baked clay: He made them [like] cropped stubble.' (*al-Fil*: 1-5)

If it is asked, 'Why did Allah repulse the Army of the Elephant and make them like a field of grain that had been eaten down to stubble?' The answer is found at the beginning of the chapter of *Quraysh*: '[He did this] to make the Quraysh feel secure, secure in their winter and summer journeys.' (*Quraysh*: 1-2)

If the House of Allah were to be destroyed, the dignity and high regard of Quraysh in the Arabian Peninsula would have been lost; thus, they would not have been able to maintain their trade expeditions in the winter and summer. It is as if Allah, Glorious is He, says to Prophet Muhammad: 'I treated these people in such manner, defended them, and made them gain status and rank in the eyes of others; yet, they treat your call to Islam with enmity because you will strip them of their haughty and tyrannical leadership that they have become used to assuming'.

Thus, Allah's saying: 'We gave them clear proof in matters [of religion]...' (*al-Jathiya*: 17) refers to the evidences and distinguishing characteristics of

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The Jews only went to Medina because they had knowledge of his advent and knew of his attributes and the time of his coming. They used to show pride at his coming against the disbelievers and idol-worshippers. They were saying: 'Indeed, the time for the coming of a Prophet to the Arabs has been due. We will follow him and kill you all in the same manner as 'Ad and Iram were killed.'⁽¹⁾ But as the Messenger was sent on his mission, they opposed and disbelieved him, just as Allah says in this verse: '...And when they had been praying for victory against the disbelievers, even when there came to them something they knew [to be true], they disbelieved in it...' (*al-Baqara*: 89). Concerning their knowledge of the Messenger, Allah *the Exalted* says: '...(They) know this as they know their own children...' (*al-An'am*: 20).

Therefore, 'Abdullah ibn Salam⁽²⁾, a Jewish rabbi, stated: 'By Allah, I knew him the moment I saw him, just as I know my son, yet my certainty and knowledge of Muhammad is firmer.'⁽³⁾ Despite this, they denied his message, disbelieved him and disregarded all signs and proofs of his prophet hood found in their sacred Books. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'They denied them, in

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- (1) *This is mentioned by Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir (1/124), narrated from ibn Ishaq from the elders of the Ansar, who said: 'We had forcibly overwhelmed and subjugated them for a long time in the pre-Islamic era, when we were idolatrous people, whereas they were the people of the Book, and they used to say, "Verily a prophet will be send with his mission anytime now, and we will follow him; his time has arrived, and with him, we will kill you all in the same manner of the massacre of the People of 'Ad and Iram." But when Allah sent His Messenger Muhammad from Quraysh, we followed him, while they disbelieved in him.' This is narrated by Al-Bayhaqi in Dala'il An-Nubuwwa (1/459) & (2/302)*
- (2) *'Abdullah ibn Salam ibn Al-Harith Al-Isra'ili Abu Yusuf Allah be pleased with him was a Companion of Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him. It is said that he is from the descendants of Yusuf (Joseph), son of Ya'qub (Jacob) peace be upon them. He accepted Islam upon the arrival of the Prophet to Medina. His name was Al-Husayn, but later, the Messenger named him 'Abdullah. When the tribulations and disorder took place between 'Ali and Mu'awiya Allah be pleased with them he lay down his arms and isolated himself from the discord. He remained living in Medina until he passed away in 43 A.H. cited in Al-A'lam of Az-Zirikli (4/90).*
- (3) *This is mentioned by Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir (1/194), and it is ascribed by As-Suyuti in his book Ad-Durr Al-Manthur (1/357) to Ath-Tha'labi on the authority of As-Suddi As-Saghir, from Al-Kalbi, from Ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him.*

their wickedness and their pride, even though their souls acknowledged them as true...' (*an-Naml*: 14).

When Allah guided `Abdullah ibn Salam to Islam, he went to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'O Messenger of Allah! Truly, Allah has guided my heart to Islam, but I fear if I accept Islam, that the Jews will censure and blame me once they find out, so please ask them about me before they know about my conversion to Islam!' The Prophet asked the Jews, 'What do you know about Ibn Salam?' They responded, 'He is our master, the son of our master, our rabbi, and the son of our rabbi.' As `Abdullah ibn Salam uttered the 'Testimony of Faith' (I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship save Allah and that you are The Messenger of Allah) they said, 'Nay, he is such-and-such' and went on insulting, abusing and reviling him. Thereupon `Abdullah said, 'O Messenger of Allah, did I not tell you that they are a people of slander and falsehood?''⁽¹⁾

It is strange that when the disbelievers of Mecca asked the Jews, 'Are we more rightly guided or Muhammad?' They responded, 'Nay! You are more rightly guided than him.'⁽²⁾ This refers to their worldly temporal power that they wished to preserve. Before the Messenger's entry to Medina, they were preparing Ibn Ubay to be their king and they had prepared the royal crown for him.⁽³⁾

(1) This is related by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (Hadith 3082, 3645, and 4120), and likewise by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (Hadith 11615 and 13265) from the Hadith of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him.

(2) This is narrated by At-Tabari in his *Tafsir* (p. 9791) from Mujahid, who stated: 'This was related concerning Ka'ab ibn Al-Ashraf and the disbelievers of Quraysh, where he said, "The disbelievers of Quraysh are more rightly guided than Muhammad."' Ibn Jurayj stated: 'Ka'ab ibn Ashraf came forward, and Quraysh came to him and asked him about Muhammad, so he belittled his work and made it look insignificant, and informed them that he was astray. Then they said to him, 'We implore you by Allah! Tell us, are we more rightly guided, or is he? For indeed you have known that we slaughter meat out of hospitality for our visitors, we give the pilgrims drink, we make the lesser pilgrimage of the House of Allah and we feed whoever it is that the winds bring to us.' He replied, 'You are more rightly guided.' A similar Hadith is given in the *Tafsir* of Ibn Abu Hatim (p. 5497).

(3) This is mentioned by Ibn Hisham in his *As-Sira An-Nabawiyya* (2/584): 'His people had made ready the pearls in order to crown him and appoint him to be their king. Then Allah the Exalted brought them His Messenger peace and blessings be upon him as they were in the middle of what they were doing. When `Abdullah ibn `Ubay's people turned away from him to accept Islam, he resented it strongly; he felt that the Messenger has wrested away his kingship. When he saw that his people had refused him as king and=

However, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* preceded him and as soon as he had reached Quba` and the people of Medina had received him, Ibn Ubay was no longer able to claim this title. He remained secretly angry at what had taken place until he died.

As Allah says, ‘... They differed among themselves out of mutual rivalry, only after knowledge came to them...’ (*al-Jathiya*: 17), this means that they differed concerning the Prophet after their full knowledge of his identity because some of them believed in him and professed Islam, while others denied and disavowed him.

There are some good people amongst the Jews whom Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* praised. In this regard, the Messenger said: ‘The best of the Jews is Mukhayriq.’⁽¹⁾ This man, as he converted to Islam, set out with the Messenger for one of the military campaigns and waive all his possessions to him, without declaring this openly. In the battle, he was killed, without even having performed a single prayer.⁽²⁾

In Allah’s saying: ‘...on the Day of Resurrection your Lord will judge between them regarding their differences’ (*al-Jathiya*: 17), He refers to the matter of belief in the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَىٰ شَرِيعَةٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ فَاتَّبِعْهَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

Now We have set you [Muhammad] on a clear religious path, so follow it. Do not follow the desires of those who lack [true] knowledge [18] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 18)

Allah has made Prophet Muhammad upon the *Shari’a* (Straight Path) which would endow man with water as being the origin of life, as Allah says:

= *professed Islam, he entered Islam in a state of hypocrisy and resentment and his hatred persisted all the time.*

(1) Mukhayriq An-Nadiri Al-Isra`ili, from the tribe of Banu An-Nadir. He turned to Islam and died a martyr in the Battle of Uhud. He was a scholar and he had bequeathed his wealth to the Prophet, who, in turn, gave it out in charity, cited in *Al-Isaba Fi Tamyiz As-Sahaba* (6/73) and in *Siret An-Nabi* (2/88). The text of the Hadith: ‘Mukhayriq is on the top of the Jews.’ In another narration ‘Mukhayriq is the best of the Jews.’ See *Dala’il An-Nubuwwa* of Abu Na`im (Hadith 39) and *Kanz Al-’Umal* of Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi (Hadith 46154).

(2) This is related by Ibn Kathir in *As-Sira An-Nabawiyya* (3/72).

‘...That We made every living thing from water...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 30). Thus, the religion of Islam is termed *sharia*. As water endows life to the human body, religion gives life to the spirits and the hearts. It will give man the eternal and everlasting true life in the Hereafter, about which Allah says, ‘Believers, respond to Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you the life...’ (*al-Anfal*: 24). There is no doubt that Allah *the Almighty* addresses believers here in their living state in this world. Thus, ‘life’ refers to the eternal one of the Hereafter.

Allah *Glorified is He* advises his Messenger to abstain from concerning himself with the denial and stubborn resistance of those people, for their actions are well known, and have precedents in the procession of previous prophets; so he should bear up any harm and grievance. In the very early period of the Prophet’s mission, Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* accompanied the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to her cousin Waraqa ibn Nawfal⁽¹⁾ and related everything that had happened to him. Waraqa said, ‘There has come the greatest prophecy just as that had come to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*.’ He also told the Messenger, ‘Verily, you are the last prophet. If I live to witness the day you call to Allah’s path, I will support you with all my strength. I wish I would live until the day they cast you out!’

The Prophet astonished asked, ‘Will they cast me out?’ Waraqa replied, ‘Yes, no previous prophet has ever called to the Right Path without being cast out.’⁽²⁾ Therefore, the Prophet’s immigration for the sake of propagating religion was a known matter from the very beginning of his mission, for it constitutes the perfection of the illumination of Islam emerged from Mecca.

(1) *Waraqa ibn Nawfal ibn Assad `Abd Al-`Uzza was a sage from the Quraysh in the pre-Islamic period... He distanced himself from idol-worship before Islam, and forbade himself any meat that was slaughtered for the idols and turned to Christianity. He was present in the very early phase of the Prophetic era, but he died before the call to Islam was propagated. He was the paternal cousin of Khadija Allah be pleased with her and he passed away around 12 years before Hijra. By that time, he had reached a very old age and had gone blind. See Al-A`lam of Az-Zirikli (8/114-115).*

(2) *This is related by Muslim in his Sahih (Hadith 221) and by Ahmad in his Musnad (Hadith 24671) from the Hadith of `Aisha Allah be pleased with her. It is also related by Abu `Awana in his Mustakhray (Hadith 245). The text in Muslim is as follows: ‘No man has ever come with what you have come with but that he was treated as an enemy, and should I live to see your day come to pass, I will help you with all my support.’*

Allah says, ‘...so follow it. Do not follow the desires of those who lack [true] knowledge’ (*al-Jathiya*: 18). Allah ordains the Prophet to follow the *shari’a* (the Straight Path), rather than the vain desires of the disbelievers, who later on proposed to the Messenger to worship their gods for a year and they will reciprocally worship Allah for a year.’ Allah forbids him from following them, as Allah directs him regarding this matter in the chapter of *al-Kafirun*.⁽¹⁾

إِنَّهُمْ لَنْ يَغْنُوكَ مِنْ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ
بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

**They cannot help you against God in any way.
Wrongdoers only have each other to protect them; the
righteous have God Himself as their protector [19]
(The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 19)**

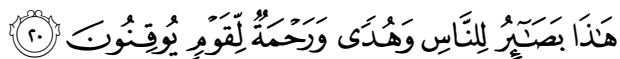
The reference here is to the disbelievers of Mecca, when they went to the Prophet’s paternal uncle Abu Taleb and said, ‘If the son of your brother seeks wealth, we will put together a fortune for him from our various properties that he would be the richest man amongst us. If he wishes to have sovereignty, we would make him our king.’ The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* replied with his famous statement: ‘O my uncle, by Allah, if they were to put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left to abandon this matter, I would not do so, until Allah makes it manifest, or I perish for its sake.’⁽²⁾

Allah says, ‘...Wrongdoers only have each other to protect them...’ (*al-Jathiya*: 19); that means that the oppressors help and support each other, for the forces of oppression have gathered and unified their targets. Whereas, as Allah says,

(1) This is related by As-Suyuti in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur Fi Tafsir bil-Ma’thur* of *al-Kafirun*. He ascribed it to Ibn Jarir At-Tabari and Ibn Abu Hatim and At-Tabarani from Ibn ‘Abbas that they said to the Messenger: ‘We offer you a proposal which will be to your advantage.’ He asked, ‘What is it?’ They said, ‘Worship our gods for a year, and we will worship your God for a year’.

(2) This is related in many books of Prophetic biography: it is related by Sayid An-Nas in his *‘Uyun Al-Athar* (1/122), also by Ibn Kathir in his *As-Sira An-Nabawiyya* (1/474) and by As-Suhayli in *Rawd Al-Unuf* (2/6); all of them on the authority of Muhammad ibn Ishaq.

‘...The righteous have Allah Himself as their Protector’ (*al-Jathiya*: 19), He is the Protector Who will support Allah-fearing people with His victory. These are some of the contrary oppositions that make the meaning in the context clearer.



**This [revelation] is a means of insight for people,
a source of guidance and mercy for those of sure
faith [20] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 20)**

Allah’s saying: ‘...A means of insight...’ (*al-Jathiya*: 20) refers to the light of truth within the human soul. Thus, the faculty of sight sees material things, whereas the faculty of insight perceives and distinguishes values and ideals.

Therefore, the seat of insight is the heart, where Allah casts His light into it. If it is said that someone has insight, this means that he has a piercing insight and perception of the reality of matters. It may be possible for such person to predict that something will happen and it comes to pass exactly as predicted.

Being guided or following the right path is to reach the truth by the shortest and easiest possible way. Guidance is not difficult to be followed, as Allah has described this with the believers in His saying: ‘Such people are following their Lord’s guidance...’ (*al-Baqara*: 5). Thus, they easily follow guidance, as if they were carried to their desired destination.

Moreover, Allah refers to the Quran as ‘Mercy’ (*al-Jathiya*: 20), in addition to being guidance and source for mankind’s insight, in another verse, Allah refers to the Quran as healing and mercy: ‘We send down the Quran as healing and mercy to those who believe...’ (*al-Isra*: 82).

As previously mentioned, there is a difference between ‘healing’ and ‘mercy’. Healing refers to the treatment of the Quran to a current disease, or its correctness to a crookedness of the path taken. Thus, the Quran cures whatever shortcomings or failings human may have, uprights whatever deviation away from the straight path towards constructive actions.

This resembles the student who abandons his studies; consequently he fails and becomes unsuccessful; yet, if he returns to studies, he then succeeds.

Thus, if human overlooks the Quran as a methodology, he will be stricken with spiritual diseases and problems, but if he returns to it, he will be cured. As for mercy, this means the preventive action to wipe out the disease from the very beginning.

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* depicts that the Quran is only a healing and a mercy for the devotees believing in its truthfulness and in being the path for guidance.

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ اجْتَرَحُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ نَجْعَلَهُمُ كَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَوَاءً نَحْيَاهُمْ وَمَمَاتُهُمْ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

Do those who commit evil deeds really think that We will deal with them in the same way as those who believe and do righteous deeds, that they will be alike in their living and their dying? How badly they judge! [21]
(The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 21)

The verb ‘to think’ may mean to assume or, in other instances, ‘to count’, from the idea of calculation and enumeration, as in Allah’s saying: ‘...Commit evil deeds...’ (*al-Jathiya*: 21). Allah *the Exalted* means that the wrongdoers committed and earned evil actions. It is for this reason that the parts of the human body are termed, in Arabic, the same as those predatory birds, for they acquire their prey. As for ‘sin’, it is everything that is offensive and that leads to the punishment or censure of the doer.

In the verse, there is a rhetorical question, which implies obvious denial and wonderment in the assumption made. How are disbelievers and believers put on equal footing? Those who turned away from the call of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and thought that they could be considered on equal footing to the believers, are mistaken in their assumption. What a vast difference between these two groups, as they could not be for sure dealt the same! Rather, the disbelievers are defeated in this life and then tortured in the Hereafter; whereas, the believers are granted victory and empowerment in this life and then will be rewarded in the Hereafter.

As Allah says, ‘...They will be alike in their living and their dying...’ (*al-Jathiya*: 21), He *the Exalted* negates that the two teams will be dealt the

same whether in this worldly life or in the Hereafter. '...How badly they judge!' (*al-Jathiya*: 21) means that whoever judges that the two groups should be judged on an equal footing, has erred because this is unjust.

Thus, it is their surmise that has actually brought about their fall and impelled them towards being faithless. Otherwise, if they had known for certain that the resulting recompense would be different; they would have believed and done righteous deeds.

وَخَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَلِتُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ
نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

**God created the heavens and earth for a true purpose:
to reward each soul according to its deeds. They will not
be wronged [22] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 22)**

Allah previously referred to the unfair judgement of the disbelievers and the impossibility of being treated equally to the believers. In this verse, He *the Almighty* then speaks about His Justice and about the balance of truth by which the Heavens and the earth have been established from the beginning, before creating mankind or bringing about the believer and disbeliever into existence.

Thus, Allah has truthfully created the Heavens and the Earth with finely attuned calculation and completely equitable composition. Thus, Allah's Justice is not confined to the rewards and requital of deeds in the Hereafter; but rather, it is an Eternal Justice, by which creation has been managed and attended.

The truth is the firmly established unchanged fact, such as Allah's signs in the Heavens and the earth, which are firmly and precisely established, with perfectly unchanged orchestrated course, from the very beginning of creation. Allah *the Exalted* gives an indication that the human's lives cannot be rectified and will not proceed in peace and security unless they are similarly guided and established by the truth, by which the Heavens and the Earth are managed.

For example, Allah's saying: 'The sun and the moon follow their calculated courses. The plants and the trees submit to His designs. He has raised up the sky. He has set the balance' (*ar-Rahman*: 5-7) means that they have been perfectly established.

The conclusion of this verse: ‘...To reward each soul according to its deeds, they will not be wronged’ (*al-Jathiya*: 22) shows that as creation is established upon truth as justice and requital should necessarily take place, as well as oppression should inevitably come to an end.

Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* states :⁽¹⁾

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَغُلَّبَ
وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

[Prophet], consider the one who has taken his own desire as a god, whom God allows to stray in the face of knowledge, sealing his ears and heart and covering his eyes – who can guide such a person after God [has done this]? Will you [people] not take heed? [23] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 23)

The deity is the worshipped entity, towards which the entire life is devoted in order to serve and carry out what it requires. ‘The worshipped deity’ is a general term that may refer to Allah, the Truthful Deity, the Creator, and the Originator of this universe, or it may also refer to the false objects of worship such as the idols, the sun or the moon.

These are false objects of worship that do not harm nor benefit anyone; only the ignorant who worship them to satisfy his ardent desire for worship

(1) The cause of revelation of this verse: Ibn Jurayj has related that it was revealed concerning Al-Harith ibn Qays, and An-Naqash has related that it was revealed concerning Al-Harith ibn Nawfal Ibn `Abd Munaf. Muqatil stated: It was revealed concerning Abu Jahl, and that is because he circumambulated the House of Allah one night, and with him was Walid ibn Al-Mughira. They spoke about the matter of the Prophet, and so Abu Jahl said, ‘By Allah, I know for certain that he is being truthful.’ To this Al Walid ibn Al-Mughira retorted: ‘What indicates this to you?’ So, Abu Jahl replied, ‘O Abu `Abd Shams! We used to call him “the truthful and the trustworthy” when he was young, and when he matured, we called him “the inveterate and treacherous liar”. By Allah, I know for certain that he is telling the truth.’ Walid ibn Al-Mughira said, ‘So what prevents you from accepting his message as the truth and believing in him?’ Abu Jahl replied, ‘The little girls of Quraysh will say of me that I followed the orphan of Abu Taleb just for his sake, in a state of defeat. By Lat and `Uzza, I will never follow him!’ Thereupon, the verse was revealed: ‘... Sealing his ears and heart...’ (*al-Jathiya*: 23).

and devotion. Thus, they seek a religion free from hardships or burdens and a god issuing no decrees or prohibitions.

The human's caprice is one of these false gods, for there are some people who take their whims as their god. Caprice in itself is blameworthy; thus, it is wisely said: 'The ruination of sound judgement is caprice'. Furthermore, Allah *Glorious is He* lauded Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because: 'He does not speak from his own desire (caprice)' (*an-Najm*: 3).

Even if Allah *the Exalted* altered some rulings promulgated by the Prophet during the earliest period of Islam; yet they were not issued out of the Prophet's personal caprice whatsoever. Therefore, the Prophet said about himself: 'My Lord has excellently taught me good manners.'⁽¹⁾

Thereafter, Allah *Glorious is He* makes clear that the person who takes his own caprice as his god has gone astray: '...Whom Allah allows to stray in the face of knowledge...' (*al-Jathiya*: 23). Thus, Allah judged that this person is astray from the Right Path because he had his own caprice. If Allah had made the human forcibly compelled, such as the Heavens and the earth, to obey Him, he would never have been able to oppose Him or go astray. However, as it is previously mentioned, Allah decrees to have willingly compliant hearts of worshippers, rather than imitating replicas of creatures obeying Him without having any choice.

Allah *Glorified is He* states: 'And the soul and Him Who made it perfect, Then He inspired it to understand what is right and wrong for it' (*ash-Shams*: 7-8). Thus, when a man chooses wrong and Allah finds him to be like that, He passes a judgment that he shall be astray forever. Thus events in this worldly life transpired just as Allah *Glorified is He* willed. Thus, as we stated previously, the angels feel surprised whenever they see actual events in real life transpiring according to what has been written on the Preserved Tablet and say, 'Glorified is our Lord.'

(1) `Abd Ar-Rahman ibn `Ali Ash-Shafei Ash-Shaybani stated in his book *Tamyiz At-Tayyib Min Al-Khabith Fima Yaduru `Ala Alsinat An-Nas Min Al-Hadith* (p. 17) concerning this Hadith: 'This has been narrated by Al-`Askari in his proverbs about `Ali Allah be pleased with him excerpted from a longer Hadith. Our sheikh has said: "Its chain of narration is weak, but its meaning is sound."'

In the verse we are discussing, Allah *Glorified is He* tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* to consider the situation of someone who has taken his own desire as a god. He *the Almighty* here, asks Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* 'Have you come to know, whether you saw it with your own eyes or not?' It is just like the statement where Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with the possessors of the elephant?' (*al-Fil*: 1). It is as if He *the Almighty* is saying, 'Did you not know?' We know that Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* was born in the same year in which the Episode of the Elephant took place, so he did not actually see it happen himself.

In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* says that He has sealed all the different means of perception in the human soul: the ear by which he hears the verses of Allah *Glorified is He* the eloquence of the Divine Speech, His Promises and Threats; the eyes by which he sees and ponders over the signs of the cosmos, thus uses them as evidence proving the presence of their Creator and Originator; and the heart, which is the seat of convictions and belief.

Allah *Glorified is He* would not have sealed these means if it were not for the fact that the one who possessed them wanted disbelief. Thereby, He *the Almighty* aided him in his disbelief by sealing the entryways so as to keep on his disbelief and prevent faith from penetrating his heart. How can someone who does not hear the Divine Speech or see the signs of the cosmos and whose heart does not incline towards the happiness of faith in Allah *Glorified is He* possibly believe?

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse asking about he who can guide such a person after He *the Almighty* [has done this]. No one possesses the power to guide himself, as Allah *Glorified is He* states in another place: 'And whomsoever Allah causes to err, there is no guide for him' (*Ghafir*: 33).

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَقَالُوا مَا هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَا إِلَّا
 الدَّهْرُ وَمَا لَهُم بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

They say, 'There is only our life in this world: we die, we live, nothing but time destroys us.' They have no knowledge of this; they only follow guesswork. Their only argument [24] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 24)

This clearly shows their denial of the Last Day despite the truth which inevitably appears upon their tongues through the unintentional slips they make. Their description of the life in which they live in such terms is a proof and an unwitting acknowledgement from them that there exists another life that is more noble and higher than this one. Similarly, they said in another verse: 'Do not spend upon those who are with the Messenger of Allah' (*al-Munafiqun*: 7). Thus, they acknowledge that he is Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* even though they are hostile to him and disbelievers in his call to faith.

They state that they die and live. However, they mean to say that they themselves die and their progeny live on after their passing away. This is because they do not believe in any life after death. Thus, when they speak of life here, they mean the extension of their progeny through the ages after their own death.

Moreover, they state that nothing but time destroys them. In other words, time alone is what causes them to die. However, it is known that time is a mere frame of events that come to pass and it is created by Allah *Glorified is He* and does not cause death. Rather, the only one who causes death is Allah *Glorified is He* Who says in a Qudsi Hadith 'Do not curse time, for I myself am (the Creator) of time.'⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* then says that they have no knowledge of this; they only follow guesswork. Now someone might ask, 'why would Allah punish them as long as they have no knowledge of this?' The answer is that He would punish them because they refused to accept the knowledge that came

(1) Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi and Muslim

from their Lord on the tongues of the Messengers. They only follow their guesswork regarding their statement about their death and life.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* states:

وَإِذَا نُتِلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ مَّا كَانَ حُجَّتَهُمْ إِلَّا أَن
قَالُوا أَتَشْتَوْنَ ءِبَادَنَا إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

**When Our clear revelations are recited to them, is to say,
'Bring back our forefathers if what you say is true [25]
(The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 25)**

It was not merely one claim; rather, they have many such arguments which they have cited in order to evade belief in Allah and His Prophet and the Quran. Thus, when the verses of the Quran are recited to them, we see that they have many different arguments against them.

Allah *Glorified is He* states, 'And when Our communications are recited to them, they say: We have heard indeed; if we pleased we could say the like of it.' (*al-Anfal*: 31) He also states: '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,' (*Yunus*: 15). They are making two requests; the first is that they want to have a Quran other than that which Allah *Glorified is He* has sent down. They also wish to change the original positions of the verses. They have already requested the omission of verses that deride and mock their idols and statues as well as the verses that threaten them with an evil end.

Furthermore, just as they attempted to discredit and defame the Quran and wished for it to be changed, they attempted to discredit and defame Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* to whom this Quran was revealed. So they said: 'And when Our clear communications are recited to them, they say: This is naught but a man who desires to turn you away from that which your fathers worshipped. And they say: This is naught but a lie that is forged. And those who disbelieve say of the truth when it comes to them: This is only clear enchantment' (*Saba*': 43).

Even though they provoked so many arguments, their intention is not to believe, though they know that their arguments are flawed with no basis

whatsoever. Now someone may ask, 'If Allah mentions their arguments in many verses of the Quran, why does He state in the verse of the chapter of *al-Jathiya* that their only argument is to say so and so? Why is there restriction of the compass of their arguments?'

If we contemplated all of the previous arguments made by them, we would see that they were merely an act of sophistry, with the aim of attaining no belief. But their main proof that was so deep-rooted in their minds was their denial of resurrection after death. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* used the word only. In addition, He *Glorified is He* states, 'most surely these do say: There is naught but our first death and we shall not be raised again. So bring our fathers [back], if you are truthful' (*ad-Dukhan*: 34-36).

There were even some amongst them who take the ashes of those who had died and rub them until they became dust that would scatter in all directions. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'and they say: What! When we shall have become bones and decayed particles, shall we then certainly be raised up, being a new creation?' (*al-Isra'*: 49)

They used to reject the idea of resurrection for they neglected to consider the beginning of existence and the beginning of the process of the creation of man. If we were to survey the number of people on this earth at any one time, we would find that it steadily increases as we go further into the future and it steadily decreases as we go back into the past. The further we go back, the less people there will be, until we reach the very first origin of mankind, namely Adam *peace be upon him* and Hawwa' (Eve). How else did we come into existence? This is an unseen matter about which they must think deeply.

Indeed, the Quran has refuted their denial of resurrection and their statement concerning the matter saying: 'Say: Is there any one among your associates who can bring into existence the creation in the first instance, then reproduce it? Say: Allah brings the creation into existence, then He reproduces it; how are you then turned away?' (*Yunus*: 34) It is Allah Alone Who is capable of this. How is it that you invert all the truths and deny the reality of the affair wilfully?

Thus, those people found no argument to base their stubborn resistance and denial when the clear verses that are patently indicative of the truth of the Quran are recited to them. Instead they said, 'bring forth our forefathers who

have passed away, if you are telling the truth.’ Now this request indicates their moral bankruptcy and pig-headedness, for they have no logic behind what they say, nor any proof to use for their position and stubbornness.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* responded by saying:

قُلِ اللَّهُ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يَجْمَعُكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ
لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

[Prophet], say, ‘It is God who gives you life, then causes you to die, and then He gathers you all to the Day of Resurrection of which there is no doubt, though most people do not comprehend’ [26] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 26)

Allah *Glorified is He* orders Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to say that it is He *the Almighty* Who gives life then causes death, i.e. in this world, and then gathers you all to the Day of Resurrection of which there is no doubt. However, most people do not comprehend. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* denied their possessing any knowledge of the matter.

Their limited knowledge is incapable of grasping the realities of these matters. Just as all of creation is a sign from Allah *Glorified is He*. Similarly, death is also one of the signs of Allah that we see and perceive every day. Since you believe in creation and death and you experience them and do not doubt their realities, you must believe that there shall be a life after this worldly life, for the possessor of these signs is One and the beliefs which you prove to be true must necessarily lead you to the truth as well.

Allah *Glorified is He* gives life and provides man with power and strength to fulfil the purpose for which he was created. The first instance of granting life was in the case of Adam *peace be upon him* when Allah *Glorified is He* created and fashioned him and breathed into him of His Spirit. By so doing, He *the Almighty* brought us into existence through this progeny of Adam *peace be upon him*. In another verse, He *Glorified is He* states: 'How do you deny Allah and you were dead and He gave you the life?' (*al-Baqara*: 28)

Thus, their disbelief has no basis or logic, for the matter of granting life and creating people from nothing does not withstand any argument. Where

was Adam *peace be upon him* before Allah *Glorified is He* created him? And where were you? Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'There surely came over man a period of time when he was a thing not worth mentioning.' (*al-Insan*: 1) Thus, no one can dispute the matter of life and death, for Allah created us from nothing. No one at all has ever alleged that he created humankind, or that he created himself.

Speaking of death, no one doubts that he will die, for death is decreed upon all of mankind. Thus, death and the creation of man from nothing are a demonstrably proved reality that is perceived by our senses and by observation. For this reason, Allah, out of His Mercy, compares events that are of the unseen realm for us by means of something we observe. How is that? Here, He *Glorified is He* informs us of a stage of creation that we have not witnessed, but death, on the other hand, is something that all of has witnessed. As long as death is something observable, Allah *Glorified is He* brings it forth as a proof of other stages of creation that we have not witnessed, as death is the opposite of life.

Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* speaks of the act of gathering, which refers to the gathering of mankind after resurrection and their return to life after having been dead. It is the Day of Gathering as He *the Almighty* states: 'And thus have We revealed to you an Arabic Quran, that you may warn the mother city and those around it, and that you may give warning of the day of gathering together wherein is no doubt,' (*ash-Shura*: 7). That is to strike fear in them. Furthermore, the gathering will take place on this day in many ways. There will be the resurrection where the body and the spirit will be brought together; the heavenly host of angels will gather together with mankind; the oppressor will be joined with the one he has oppressed; and the leader will be joined with his followers. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah, there is no god but He, He will most certainly gather you together on the resurrection day, there is no doubt in it; and who is more true in word than Allah?' (*an-Nisa*': 87)

Then Allah *Glorified is He* states:



وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُنْفِخُ الْمُبْطِلُونَ

Control of everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to God. When the Hour comes, those who follow falsehood will be the losers on that Day [27] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 27)

Here, the Arabic expression, by means of being preceded by a prepositional phrase, indicates restriction. Thus, the control and dominion of the Heavens and the Earth has been restricted in its attribution to Allah Alone, without any partner. The Day of Judgement will undoubtedly arise, as if it had been sleeping and then woken up. Furthermore, the Last Hour has been made obscure to us so that we may anticipate its coming at any moment.

Thus, the use of obscurity, as we have stated previously, is the very essence of clarification, for it keeps us in a state of constant preparation for the Last Day at any time. This is just as Allah *Glorified is He* has made obscure for man the time of his appointed end on earth, in order that he always call it to mind at every point in time and never be heedless or careless of it. He who does not have the ability to live for the duration of a blink of an eye must be mindful of the Hereafter and wary of the coming of his time of death, while he is in a state of disobedience to Allah *Glorified is He*.

For whoever dies while doing a thing shall be raised up doing it, since death does not necessarily abide by natural causes. Death comes about with no causes in advance. Someone dies because he was supposed to die at that time and his time has come. Indeed, someone might enter the operation room yet does not exit from it; that is to say, the treatment that was meant to save him becomes the reason that kills him. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* obscures the time of our death with wisdom and a particular aim.

However, it is from His Mercy upon His creation that when Allah *Glorified is He* made the coming of the Last Hour obscure to us, He provided us with signs of its coming. This is so that those who are forgetful and heedless shall take notice and that mankind would not be taken by surprise suddenly. Out of His Mercy, He has provided us with both the minor signs and the greater signs of the Last Hour. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'None but He shall manifest it

at its time; it will be momentous in the heavens and the earth; it will not come on you but of a sudden' (*al-A 'raf*: 187).

Allah *Glorified is He* made it clear that when the Hour arises, those who stubbornly follow falsehood will be the losers. 'To lose' is the opposite of 'to gain' or 'to profit'. This is a matter that is known by businessmen, for every businessman wants profits and to increase his capital.

Therefore, every single action must be considered in terms of profit or loss. The disbeliever surmises that his work in this life will pay off profitably. However, he will be surprised on the Day of Judgement, when the time for doing actions will have ended. On that Day he will discover that his actions resulted ultimately in loss. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'On the day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil, it shall wish that between it and that [evil] there were a long duration of time' (*Al- 'Imran*: 30).

The meaning of loss here is to find out that all his actions have become like fine dust scattered about in the winds, completely useless and without any benefit; a fact which is recorded in the Quran. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And [as for] those who disbelieve, their deeds are like the mirage in a desert which the thirsty man deems to be water; until when he comes to it he finds it to be naught, and there he finds Allah, so He pays back to him his reckoning in full; and Allah is quick in reckoning,' (*an-Nur*: 39).

It is for this reason that when we were asked how it was possible that all those people who have come up with new inventions and innovations that serve humankind, make daily life easier for people and reduce their pain and discomfort could possibly enter hell, we answered, 'Indeed, this is so; for they carried out these actions for the service of mankind, yet there was nothing in their minds about service to Allah. For this reason, they received accolades and wages from mankind in honour of what they had accomplished and as a way of perpetuating their memories and exalting them. Thus, busts and statues were created of them and books were written about them and so forth.

Therefore, they shall have no portion of the reward of the Hereafter. Had they worked for the sake of Allah, they would have found their wages and reward with Allah *Glorified is He* for the employee does not ask for his wages

except from the one for whom he is working. Therefore, the disbeliever will be taken by surprise by this reality as we understand from the statement of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'He finds Allah, so He pays back to him his reckoning in full,' (*an-Nur*: 39).

Allah states:

وَتَرَى كُلَّ أُمَّةٍ جَاثِيَةً كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ تُدْعَى إِلَى كِتَابِهَا الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

You will see every community kneeling. Every community will be summoned to its record: 'Today you will be repaid for what you did [28] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 28)

Allah *Glorified is He* says that on the Day of Judgement, you will see every nation kneeling and crouching or perching on the tips of their toes. This is a frightening, submissive, and degrading position to assume. Related to this is Allah's statement: 'Then shall We certainly cause them to be present round hell on their knees' (*Maryam*: 68). Similar to this is the verb 'to fall' or 'lie prone.' In other words, to sit or perch in one's place, as Allah *Glorified is He* states: 'So they became motionless bodies in their abodes' (*Hud*: 94).

Therefore, it is a critical situation and a position indicating terror, fright and great fear and uneasiness, whereby people will not be able to sit and so they will be kneeling. When their fright increases, they will perch on the tips of their toes which is a position assumed by someone who is awaiting and expecting something grave and terrifying to take place. As for the natural way of sitting on the ground, one sits firmly seated upon the earth, a position that grants calm or tranquillity.

Now there is a difference between sitting down and sitting up, even if the final outcome is the same. The difference is that sitting down takes place after having been in a standing position, for we say, 'He was standing and then he sat down.' As for sitting up, this takes place after initially reclining or lying down on one's side, for we say, 'he was lying down and then he sat up.'

There is a fine philosophical point to be noted here, which is that sitting down takes place from a position that is initially higher such as standing. Sitting up takes place from a position that is lower such as lying down. Both

sitting up and sitting down ensure that the human being enters a state of rest, whereby most of his body is on the ground. In this way he relaxes, as opposed to one standing, when his body is supported merely by his two feet.

As a result, if you were to stand for a long time, you would tire and you would start shifting from one foot to the other... If you were to begin walking on top of this, you would increase the load and discomfort on your feet. If you were to carry something while walking, you would again increase the load and discomfort you carry, and so forth.

So if a man in this situation begins to tire, the first thing he does to lighten the load and discomfort on his two feet is to put down whatever he was carrying. Then, if he becomes even more tired, he stops walking, in order to lessen the physical exertion he must endure. After that he sits down, and if he tires more, he reclines or lies down and sprawls on the ground with his entire body. This position ensures that he will get the maximum amount of rest his body requires.

However, this Quranic image of crouching or lying facedown on the ground does not indicate a state of rest. Rather, it indicates subjugation, debasement, brokenness and a severe amount of fear that will make the disbeliever in the Hereafter, may Allah save us, lie facedown on the ground, or kneel down on his two knees out of great fear. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* portrays for us a situation that is graphic to make you feel the great horror of the situation and the severity of the distress and agony it will bring. You are free to imagine the situation. Imagine that you are really undergoing this terrifying experience, one in which everyone is anxiously occupied with the state of his own soul.

Thus, when it is said that the Judgement Day will take place, it means that it will not be something passive. Mankind will be crouching; everyone, be he a believer or disbeliever, all will be kneeling in fear and awaiting what will happen. No one will escape the law. All will be overwhelmed with fright and anxiety and everyone will be awaiting the Judgement of Allah.

Allah *Glorified is He* says that every community will be summoned to its record. Thus, He attributed the record to the nation. For this reason, the disbelievers raised an objection about this verse, for Allah *Glorified is He* states in another verse: 'This is Our record that speaks against you with justice;

surely We wrote what you did' (*al-Jathiya*: 29). Thus, they allege, 'One time, Allah attributes 'the record' to the nation, while the other time He attributes it to Himself.' Had they truly understood what Allah *Glorified is He* had meant by that, they would not have found any reason to raise such an objection.

The meaning of 'Our Record' here is 'the one We asked the angels to write down that it may serve as a witness and a proof against its owner on the Day of Judgement. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* shall say to him: 'Read your book; your own self is sufficient as a reckoner against you this day,' (*al-Isra*': 14). It is also their record in the sense that it is the one which records all the actions of the person. Thus, for every word there is its proper meaning and indication. Here, we should consider that one word in the Quran may give various meanings when used in different positions.

For it to be understood properly, the Quran requires contemplation, reflection, and knowledge of the causes of and general circumstances surrounding the revelation of the various verses. Read, for instance, the statement of Allah: 'And do not give away your property which Allah has made for you a [means of] support to the weak of understanding,' (*an-Nisa*': 5). The weakness of understanding refers to the one who is incapable of managing his finances with any responsibility and is foolhardy in his expenditure. For this reason, the Lawgiver does not grant him the right to assume control over his wealth, but rather, it is given over to the responsibility and possession of his guardian. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* attributed their property to their guardian although it is theirs. This is because the matter must be considered in its entirety, as indicated by the fact that the Muslims are equal in respect of blood and the granting of immunity or protection of the least of them to a non-Muslim.

Therefore, we take the money of foolhardy person and preserve it for him until we discern some indications of good sense and maturity in him, in which case we give him back his wealth so that he may manage it himself. It is for this reason that Allah *Glorified is He* states: 'Then if you find in them maturity of intellect, make over to them their property' (*an-Nisa*': 6). Note that He attributed the property to them because it has now become their own property and they now have the freedom to manage it by themselves.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Today you will be repaid for what you did' (*al-Jathiya*: 28). The word 'today' refers to the Day of Judgement. The recompense accorded on this day will be fulfilled according to the kind of actions performed in this worldly life.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* states:

هَذَا كِتَابُنَا يَنْطِقُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ إِنَّا كُنَّا نَسْتَنْسِخُ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

Here is Our record that tells the truth about you:

We have been recording everything you do [29]

(The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 29)

The word 'record' here refers to the book of deeds. It is well known that the sense of speech is utilised, and gives expression by use of the tongue, for it is the primary means of expression. The record will be read and will not articulate or utter anything on its own. However, this record will be like someone who articulates and bears witness against its owner. This is because of the severity of the reality of one's worldly actions that is contained within it.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'We have been recording everything you do,' (*al-Jathiya*: 29) meaning that He has been establishing and confirming or taking from the original record a separate copy to give to the owner. This copy of the original book is made so that the owner may read it and peruse the actions which preceded him in his worldly life. This is just as we say, 'an original record and its copy. Allah *Glorified is He* shall give him a copy of his original book containing all his deeds so that it may serve as a witness against him.

In addition, amongst the various meanings of the term 'recording' is the notion of the confirmation of something such that nothing whatsoever is overlooked and for which no large or small deed is left unaccounted. This meaning is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'On the day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil, it shall wish that between it and that [evil] there were a long duration of time' (*Al- 'Imran*: 30). He *the Almighty* also says: 'He utters not a word, but there is by him a watcher at hand,' (*Qaf*: 18).

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently states:

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُدْخِلُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ
 فِي رَحْمَتِهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٣٠﴾

**Those who believed and did good deeds will be admitted by
 their Lord into His mercy – that is the clearest triumph [30]
 (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 30)**

We are still talking about the record of deeds that mankind will read in the Hereafter. This verse speaks of the first category of people which are the believers who did righteous deeds. Such people will take hold of their records with their right hand and will find their contents to be in the best of conditions and so they will rejoice and become proud.

These verses have been clarified by Allah *Glorified is He* elsewhere: 'Then as for him who is given his book in his right hand, he will say: Lo! Read my book: Surely I knew that I shall meet my account. So he shall be in a life of pleasure, In a lofty garden, The fruits of which are near at hand: Eat and drink pleasantly for what you did beforehand in the days gone by' (*al-Haqq*: 19-24).

If we contemplate the verse in question, we will find that Allah says that He admitted them into His Mercy. Thus, it is as if His Grace and Mercy were a huge vessel in which they are admitted and by which they are encompassed. His Mercy will encompass them and surround them from every direction as if they have nothing except His Mercy. That is because they were unhappy and bore so much trouble in this worldly life. They carried the burdens of worship and righteous actions and were constantly tossed between bliss and suffering, profit and loss, and good health and sickness. However, as for the Hereafter, they will find nothing, but the Mercy of Allah which will encompass and surround them.

Allah *Glorified is He* combines belief and good deeds together so as to refer to the fact that faith in the heart alone is not enough. There must be its fruit, which is crystal clear in acting upon the Divine Way of Guidance. For this reason, the Quran always makes a link between faith and righteous deeds. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'I swear by the time, Most surely man is in loss, Except those who believe and do good,' (*al-'Asr*: 1-3). This is because faith in Allah *Glorified is He* and the Resurrection, the Final Accounting and Fate and

Destiny places man in a state of certainty that he will be taken to account for all the deeds he does in the worldly life.

So if you are going to be questioned and taken to account, you must naturally be alert not to commit any sin, however small it may be, nor forsake any good, however easy or light it may be. For whoever faces accounting as his final end would be best not to let these matters slip by him except out of oversight or forgetfulness.

We have stated previously that because of the Mercy of Allah *Glorified is He* towards His creation, He prescribed repentance for them. The mere fact that repentance is something legitimate and possible and that its doors are open for all people is itself a great mercy, for both the negligent sinner and the society which is made to suffer misery by the deeds of such sinners.

The pronoun 'that' at the end of the verse is an indication of the entrance of the people of faith and those of righteous action into Allah's Mercy that is the triumph that is patently clear, encompassing the righteous through consummate good and benefit, such that nothing that is inconsistent with the Truth will seep into this Infinite Divine Mercy. Conversely, there is then the opposite case to consider.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَفَلَمْ تَكُنْ ءَايَاتِي تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا تُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

But those who disbelieved [will be asked]: 'When My revelations were recited to you, were you not arrogant and persistent in wicked deeds? [31] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 31)

These people of disbelief are in opposition to those who believed, thus they will take their record of deeds with their left hands. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And as for him who is given his book in his left hand he shall say: O would that my book had never been given me: And I had not known what my account was: O would that it had made an end [of me]' (*al-Haqq*: 25-27).

Therefore, their recompense will be hell, but before they enter it, they must be admonished, blamed, and chastised. It must be clarified to them that they have no excuse for their lack of faith. Clear verses and Messengers came

down to them, Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* did not take anything away from what was due to them and did not leave them to their own devices, nor did He take them unawares with this punishment. How many times did He *the Almighty* call them to faith and show compassion towards them?

We may note that these people have compounded their arrogance against the Truth with committing crimes. As for arrogance, it is to reject the Truth and refuse to accept it from the ones who bear it. Would that they had stopped at this level of wrong action and left people to themselves! But they transgressed to the point of being culpable of committing criminal sins by deriding and jeering at those who believed and had faith.

This issue has been explained in the verse wherein Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Surely they who are guilty used to laugh at those who believe. And when they passed by them, they winked at one another' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29-30). The reference here is to their mockery and derision at the believers. Further, Allah says: 'And when they returned to their own followers they returned exulting' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 31). This demonstrates that such people and their cadre are equally guilty of committing criminal sins, and that they were all equally immersed in corruption.

People like these are found at every time and place. We see them make fun of the one who prays or who emulates Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*. We hear many scornful, mocking words from them, even though they read this very same verse with us. However, Allah *Glorified is He* reassures the people of faith and says to them: 'Do not bother yourself with these people who cause so much harm to you in this world and wait for what happens in the Hereafter.' Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'So today those who believe shall laugh at the unbelievers; On thrones, they will look. Surely the disbelievers are rewarded as they did' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 34-36).

Next, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَالسَّاعَةُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا قُلْتُمْ مَا نَدْرِي مَا
السَّاعَةُ إِن نَّظُنُّ إِلَّا ظَنًّا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُصْبِقِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

When it was said to you, “God’s promise is true: there is no doubt about the Hour,” did you not reply, “We know nothing of the Hour. This is only conjecture in our opinion. We are not convinced”?’ [32] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 32)

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* speaks of another type of people who deny the Resurrection, for the first group are certain and have solid belief in their conviction that there will be no Resurrection, nor any accounting of their actions. The second type, however, have not reached a state of certainty concerning the matter; rather, they merely surmise that the Resurrection may be true. ‘To surmise’ is ‘to guess’ something and give preponderance to a belief over another.

We have already clarified previously that there are five states of varying degrees of certainty concerning a matter: true knowledge, ignorance, doubt, surmise, and whim. To surmise is to give preponderance to something you think to be true. Whim is to give preponderance to something other than what is true.

Further, there is something that you believe in and which you are certain; yet there might be something about which you are not entirely sure. Now what you are sure of and use as a basis for other beliefs is 'sure knowledge.' As for what you cannot use as a basis for proof, it is not 'sure knowledge'; rather, it is blind following or imitation, just as when the child says: ‘He, Allah, is one.’ What the child says is true, but he cannot prove anything, nor can anything else be claimed based on such a statement. Conversely, anyone who says something that he is certain of, but which he does not accord with what is truly real is clearly demonstrating ignorance.

As for the matter of knowledge, it is something that you are certain about and is in accordance with reality. That is, it is proved and it opposes ignorance, which occurs when one believes something with certainty but has no proof of it.

Doubt, on the other hand, is when affirmation and negation of a belief are equally possible in the mind, such that you are unable to be absolutely sure of

either one. Thus, to surmise is to give precedence to an option, whereas doubt is when both the affirmation of a belief and its negation are equally possible.

Next, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

وَبَدَأَ لَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا عَمِلُوا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

The evil of their actions will [then] become clear to them.

The punishment they mocked will engulf them [33]

(The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 33)

Allah *Glorified is He* tells them that the evil deeds that they have committed in this world will become apparent to them. In addition, they have been encompassed by these deeds and thereby will not find any escape, nor any place of refuge.

Next, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

وَقِيلَ الْيَوْمَ نَنْسِيكُمْ كَمَا نَسِيتُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا وَمَأْوَاكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّنْ نَّاصِرِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾

It will be said, ‘Today We shall ignore you just as you ignored your appointment with this Day. The Fire will be your home and no one will help you [34]

(The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 34)

The gentle kindness and Mercy of Allah *Glorified is He* even towards His enemies is crystal clear in this verse in question. Allah *Glorified is He* puts the verb ‘say’ in the passive voice and did not say that He will announce it to them, for it is out of His Mercy not to confront them with this reality directly. The word ‘today’ refers to the Day of Judgement when Allah *Glorified is He* shall ignore them.

Allah *Glorified is He* never forgets anything and is never oblivious of anything. Thus, the meaning here is that He *the Almighty* will abandon and neglect them to their punishment. Allah *Glorified is He* will not look at them with any mercy, just as they neglected and left consideration of this great affair during their worldly life. It never crossed their minds to think about it seriously, for had they done so, perhaps they would have been taken by the Mercy of Allah for their consideration of the matter.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* makes clear the cause of this abandonment, saying, 'As you ignored your appointment with this Day,' (*al-Jathiya*: 34) meaning that He will abandon them just as they abandoned taking any serious consideration of this day and abandoned working and preparing for it. Thus, Hell shall be their abode. The term 'abode' refers to a place that a person retires to rest and relieve himself of his tiredness, or a place in which he feels safe from fear. So, what will the situation be, if these people have hell as their abode, final resting place and their end? What will their condition be like?

Moreover, they shall have none to aid them. This is a complete cutting off hope for any deliverance and making them deprived of any support. For in this abode, they will not find anyone to liberate them or feel any compassion for them, or anyone to lighten their punishment; rather, the opposite will take place. Everyone else will wash their hands of them and abandon them to their punishment and some will even precede them into it, as Allah *Glorified is He* states about Pharaoh: 'He shall lead his people on the resurrection day, and bring them down to the fire' (*Hud*: 98).

Next, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

ذَلِكُمْ بِأَنكُمْ أَخَذْتُمْ ءَايَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُوًا وَغَرَّتْكُمُ الْحَيَوةُ الدُّنْيَا
فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُخْرَجُونَ مِنْهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُسْعَوُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

Because you received God's revelations with ridicule and were deceived by worldly life.' They will not be brought out of the Fire on that Day, nor will they be given the chance to make amends [35] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 35)

Allah *Glorified is He* is referring to the fact that the punishment which descended upon them and enclosed them is due to the evil deeds which were done in the worldly life and so this is just and equitable recompense. They will be treated justly and Allah *Glorified is He* will not oppress them, not even an atom's weight. Further, they treated the revelations of Allah *Glorified is He* mockingly and derisively. They denied and rejected them and scoffed at them as well.

Now in the verse, there is the expression of mockery used in a hyperbolic form. This means that they went to furthest extents of mockery and derision,

just as we say that 'So-and-so is just and so-and-so is justice,' meaning he is justice itself.

Moreover, they were deceived by worldly life. It deceived them with its vanities, apparent splendour, and beauty and with its cheap finery. Thereby they worked in order to obtain what it had to offer and forgot to work for the Hereafter. Therefore, they will not escape from hell, nor will they be allowed to make amends.

The Arabic verb for make amends derives from the verb 'to blame' and this action is something that does not take place except between those who have love for each other. For this reason, some people have stated, 'Love remains as long as people blame each other for their faults.' When you wrong your friend, he comes to you and blames you for what you did and he does this because he wishes to hear an apology or excuse from you so that his love for you may continue. He does this because he does not wish to break off relations with you.

Thus, it is said, 'So-and-so a person sought to be allowed to make amends, so the other freed him of blame or reproach.' In other words, he forgave him. A famous poet has said:

As for reproach, it is convenient between those who bear love

For love rectifies by reproach and is so confirmed

For this reason, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* returned from At-Ta'if after its people made him suffer grievous harm, he sat down and beseeched his Lord saying, 'So long as You are not angry with me, I care not.' However, he then remembered to say, 'Your Favour is all that counts for me. I seek refuge in the light of Your countenance, by which all darkness is illuminated. And the things of this world and the next are rightly ordered that your anger does not fall on me, nor your displeasure descends on me. To you are all supplications until You are pleased.' In other words, O Lord, I have for you what would rid me of reproach. Thus, it is to receive an acknowledgement of being wrong from someone and you appease him.

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says those people will not be asked or allowed to appease. No compromise will be accepted and no excuses that they furnish will avail them, nor will any intercession be granted to them. If they wished to seek Allah's contentment by any means at all, their requests will be refused

and will not be accepted. Their repentance will not be accepted, for it will be of no benefit on this Day.

Next, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

فَلِلَّهِ الْحَمْدُ رَبِّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَرَبِّ الْأَرْضِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

**So praise be to God, Lord of the heavens and earth,
Lord of the worlds [36] (The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 36)**

First, the term 'Praise be to Allah' is a clause consisting of a nominal subject and a fronted predicate to indicate the confinement of praise to Allah alone. For praising Allah *Glorified is He* is obligatory before everything else because He Created and provided from nothing as well as guided mankind through clear signs and verse to the path of truth.

Praising Allah *Glorified is He* is obligatory upon everyone for His attribute of being All Sustaining and for the way to which He has guided us and for the abode of recompense with which He rewards the believer and punishes the disbeliever. Praise is obligatory to Allah for having brought us to life with a spirit from Him which has given life to our material bodies in this life and by which will give life to our values and ideals in the Hereafter. It is for this reason that Allah *Glorified is He* addresses us while we are alive in this world and says: 'O you who believe! Answer [the call of] Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you the life' (*al-Anfal*: 24). Thus, the meaning of life here is the life lived according to values and ideals that grant you Everlasting life in the Hereafter. Further, Allah says: 'And as for the next abode, that most surely is the life-- did they but know?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 64) This means that it is the true life that merits striving for on our part.

Among His blessings that merit praise is that He taught us how to praise Him by this expression that is so light on the tongue and which both the scholar and the illiterate are equally capable of articulating. Everyone says, 'All Praise be to Allah.' Everyone praises and glorifies Allah with one expression and if it were not for this equivalence in the ability to utter this expression, the educated, the eloquent and those who have mastered pure Arabic expression would have become successful and the illiterate who are

not fluent and the person who stammers and cannot express himself clearly would have lost out. Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has called our attention to this matter, when he stated concerning the praise of Allah, 'Glory be to You, We cannot enumerate your blessings and praises. You are as You praise Yourself.'

Thus, the meaning of the clause is that Allah *Glorified is He* is always and forever worthy of all praise. This praise is never interrupted or cut off, nor does it ever reach an end, neither from the one who praises, nor on the part of The One praised. Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse with the reasons behind thanking Allah as saying: 'Lord of the heavens and earth, Lord of the worlds,' (*al-Jathiya*: 36). The Lord is The One Who raises and brings up and The Master and The Giver of all that we have, thus how is it conceivable that He not be worshipped?

Next, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

وَلَهُ الْكِبَرِيَّاتُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٣٧﴾

**True greatness in the heavens and the earth is
rightfully His: He is the Mighty, the Wise [37]
(The Quran, *al-Jathiya*: 37)**

This is another factor that necessitates praising alone and that is that He is described by the attribute of greatness which is grandeur, majesty, and force. Once again, the manner in which this is expressed is by means an expression indicating restriction or confinement.

In other words, this is for Him alone and this is from amongst the greatest favours that Allah *Glorified is He* has bestowed upon us that we not be slaves to anything other than Him. For Allah did not make you his servant and slave but to spare you from worshipping other than Him. If haughtiness and pride were not for Allah *Glorified is He*, we would have been slaves of anyone who had any kind of power. Anyone of whom we had any need, be it even the ironworker and carpenter that relieves you of a need that you have could thus exploit and enslave you to some extent.

Therefore, it is as if Allah *Glorified is He* were saying to you, 'Set yourself at rest, O My slave, for you will not be a slave of other than Me, for grandeur,

majesty, pride and haughtiness are for Me alone and I am the Lord of all of you and all of creation are My dependents and the most beloved of them to Me are those that are the most gracious to My dependents.

Do we not say in the popular saying, 'If you do not have a big boss to help you, you better get hold of one.' This is similar to the relationship that Allah *Glorified is He* has with those who believe in Him. He will be on the side of those who worship Him Alone and will facilitate their affairs and take care of their needs: those who ask Him for assistance so that He gives it to them and those who seek refuge in Him so that He defends them and supports them. Therefore, this attribute of Allah *Glorified is He* should be counted as one of His greatest blessings upon His servants.

Allah *Glorified is He* confirms this restriction of this attribute through a Qudsi Hadith when He states: 'Pride is My Cloak and Grandeur is My lower garment. Whoever contends with Me in either of them I will hurl into Hell.'⁽¹⁾

Why is this so? Because such a contender did not create this creation, nor can he be entrusted with its maintenance and management. Thus, man does not show arrogance to any of creation unless his ego has been veiled from minding the pride and haughtiness of Allah. For only the one is always conscious of Allah's pride and haughtiness in his heart will be ashamed to show any arrogance or contend with His lord in anything relating to this attribute.

The Arabic word *Kibriya'* (glory) is derived from the root *kabar*, with a *fatha* over the letter 'ba' to indicate magnification, and an increase of the root meaning. It also gives the meaning of the word '*azhama* (greatness) when written with a *damma* vowel over the letter 'ba' (*kabur*). Concerning the meaning of the word *kabur*, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'It is a monstrous assertion (*kaburat*) that comes out of their mouths: what they say is nothing but lies' (*al-Kahf*: 5). This is concerning the matter of the slander against 'Aisha Allah *be pleased with her*. He *the Almighty* has informed us that the All-Great is one of His Most Beautiful Names. He did not say 'The Greater,' even though the latter term confers a special distinction that does not appear in the former. Nevertheless, He has made it an attribute of His in prayer, and so we say: 'Allah

(1) Narrated by Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah and Ahmad

is the Greatest.’ We say this because it means that prayer takes you out of something that is great to something that is greater. It is as if He *the Almighty* wishes to say to us, ‘The actions and activities of this worldly life are important and great, but Allah is Greater than any other thing.’ We can see the importance of worldly activity and engaging in it in the chapter of *al-Jumu’a* which states that He takes you out of your work to perform the prayer; yet after the prayer has ended, He commanded you to return to your regular activities and work. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘O you who believe! When the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the Remembrance of Allah and leave off trading,’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 9).

So Allah *the Almighty* took us from the very pinnacle of work which is engagement in trade in order to give us a dose of faith that will assist us in continuing along our life paths. With prayers having been completed, Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘Then disperse abroad in the land and seek of Allah’s Grace, and remember Allah much, that you may be successful’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 10). Therefore, we do not look down on worldly activities, for it is something great according to Allah *the Almighty* and by it life is sustained and continued. However, if the worldly activity is to be compared with the establishment of prayers, then prayers are greater and more important. Now if we return to the matter of the terms used here, we find that Allah *the Almighty* has chosen for Himself the Most Beautiful Name ‘The Great,’ and not ‘The Greater,’ for whatever is greater has something below it that is great as well. As for ‘The Great’, whatever is below it is small or insignificant, and everything other than Allah *the Almighty* is small or insignificant, this point is crystal clear in Allah’s saying: ‘He is *the Almighty*, the Wise,’ (*al-Jathiya*: 37) meaning that He is the Vanquisher that is never defeated; as for the word ‘Wise’, it means that He is the One Who puts everything in its proper place. Thus, the attribute of pride or haughtiness, for Allah *the Almighty* does not simply mean forcible compulsion, might and the subjecting of others to trials without any control or restraint. Rather, He is also All-Wise, and disposes of affairs in accordance with His Absolute Wisdom. The one who contemplates the chapter of *al-Jathiya* will find that it begins with the statement of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘*Ha Mim* [1] This Scripture is sent down from Allah the Almighty the Wise [2]’ (*al-Jathiya*: 1-2). It ends also with His saying: ‘He is the Almighty, the Wise’ (*al-Jathiya*: 37). It is as if the chapter were parenthesised by the nobility that belongs to Allah

the Almighty and the Absolute Wisdom that belongs to Allah *the Exalted Alone*. What is amazing in this context is that the chapter of *al-Ahqaf* comes directly afterwards, and it, too, begins with the saying of Allah: '*Ha Mim* [1] This Scripture is sent down from Allah *the Almighty* the Wise, [2]' (*al-Ahqaf*: 1-2). It is as if Allah *the Almighty* was confirming these Attributes and establishing the awareness of them firmly in the hearts of the believers to make them feel greater at peace with Him and greater at peace with His Way of Guidance. It is also as if He *the Almighty* were saying to them: 'Set yourself at rest, for I am the One Who graced you with favours from pre-eternity, by bringing you into existence from nothing, by giving life to your material bodies with a spirit from Me, and then supplying you with the necessities and maintenance of life, by guiding you to Me through *ayat* (verses) that revive your hearts and give you everlasting life on the Day of Judgement.' Thus, just as He *the Almighty* has guaranteed your past, He will guarantee your future. For His Blessings will not be wrested away, and His Granting of gifts will never be exhausted. This is because Pride is for Him *Glorified is He Alone* in the Heavens and the Earth; thus no might or power can destroy these blessings or hold them back from you when they are granted to you by Him *Glorified is He*. When Allah *the Almighty* mentions both His Attributes of Might and Wisdom, it is only so that He may say to us: 'Be careful if you are stricken with incidents that oppose this manifestation of might and nobility in the task of calling people to faith, and know that they did not take place except for some special wisdom.' Someone, for example, may say: 'If Allah is Mighty and is not vanquished, why did He leave Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* to the people of Ta'if such that they caused him much pain, insulted him and pelted him with stones until his noble feet were stained with blood?' I reply: 'Search deeply for the wisdom of this event; for part of the wisdom intended by Allah *the Almighty* when evil gains the upper hand is that the people of good are tested, and the leadership of Islam is purified in a manner that no one else can uphold and bear witness to except those who are powerfully and firmly established in sound belief and the Truth; those who do not abandon it or even give it up. It is upon their shoulders that the religion will be borne and the call to faith will be spread. There must be some process of testing, purification and distinguishing of the Muslims from the hypocrites. Remember the story of Al-Hudaybiya when the disbelievers repulsed Prophet Muhammad *Allah's*

peace and blessings be upon him and the believers who had come to visit the Sacred House. The disbelievers prevented them from entering Mecca, even though the believers were so close. Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* agreed to return without entering Mecca and without performing the Lesser Pilgrimage ('*Umra*), and contracted the Treaty of Al-Hudaybiya with the disbelievers. For this reason, the Muslims got angry and almost contradicted his command to return to Medina. At this point 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *may Allah be pleased with him* began arguing with him *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* saying to him, 'O Messenger of Allah! Are we not upon the Truth?' 'Yes,' replied Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*. 'Umar then said to him, 'Are they not upon falsehood?' 'Yes,' Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* replied. 'Then why are we yielding in such a lowly manner against the honour of our religion?' Thereupon Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *may Allah be pleased with him* replied, 'Hold on to your stirrup, O 'Umar, for verily, he is the Messenger of Allah.'⁽¹⁾ In other words, he meant to say 'Keep to the proper bounds, and know your station with respect to the Messenger of Allah' This happened because the Muslims were craving to visit the Sacred House of Allah *the Almighty* and underwent the great trouble of travelling to it. They were only 20 kilometres from Mecca, had taken their sacrificial offerings along with them and had made preparations for performing the Lesser Pilgrimage ('*Umra*). Therefore, it was disheartening for them to be prevented from completing it, and for that reason, they were disgruntled and upset at the decision to return.

The matter got to the point that our Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* said to his wife, Umm Salama *may Allah be pleased with her*⁽²⁾, 'The people are ruined Umm Salama.' She asked, 'And why so?' whereupon he *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'I commanded them, and they did

(1) See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 1785 in the Book of Jihad; see also Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 4844 in the section concerning the commentary of the chapter of *al-Fath*, from Hadith of Sahl ibn Hanif.

(2) Umm Salama *Allah be pleased with her* is Hind bint Suhayl Al-Qurashiyya Al-Makhzumiyya. She married Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* in the fourth year of Hijra. She was born in the year 28 before Hijra. In other words, she was 32 years old when she married Prophet Muhammad. She passed away in the year 62 A.H. at the age of 90, and was from among the most perfect women in intelligence and character. See Az-Zirikli, *Al-'Alam*, 8/97.

not obey me.' She said, 'O Messenger of Allah, forgive them, for they came with a strong desire to visit the House of Allah. But go forth, O Messenger of Allah, and do what Allah has commanded you to carry out, for if they see you, they will know that the matter is serious, and they will do the same.' Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* felt uplifted upon hearing this, and so he went out and did as she had suggested.⁽¹⁾ When his people saw him, they calmed down and accepted his decision and followed him. Thereafter, they returned to Medina without performing the Lesser Pilgrimage ('*Umra*). Before they reached Medina, Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* had received a revelation clarifying to them the wisdom of that which had been hidden from them. This revelation was also meant to teach them a lesson about might and nobility, and its connection with wisdom. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'They were the ones who disbelieved, who barred you from the Sacred Mosque, and who prevented the offering from reaching its place of sacrifice. If there had not been among them, unknown to you, believing men and women whom you would have trampled underfoot, inadvertently incurring guilt on their account— Allah brings whoever He will into His mercy— if the [believers] had been clearly separated, We would have inflicted a painful punishment on the disbelievers,' (*al-Fath*: 25). Therefore, there was wisdom in their being prevented from entering Mecca that year, for there were some of their brethren in faith in the city who had kept their belief secret and had not let the other disbelievers know about their faith. Had they entered into battle with the disbelievers, they would have been forced to encounter the Muslims face-to-face, and would have killed their own brothers in faith, and they would have been stricken with shame and ignominy for their actions, either through sin or through rough abuse.

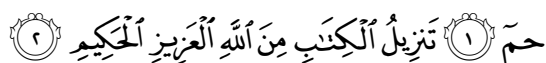
(1) See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 18152 from the Hadith of Al-Miswar ibn Makhrama and Marwan ibn Al-Hakam regarding the Treaty of Al-Hudaybiya, in which it is related: 'Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* said to Umm Salama: "O Umm Salama, what is the matter with the people?" She replied, "O Messenger of Allah, their hearts have been shaken with what you can see, so say no word to any man and go to wherever your offer of sacrifice may be, and perform the sacrifice and shave your head, and if you do that, the people will follow you." So he *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* went out without speaking to anyone until he carried out the sacrifice and slaughtered his offering, and then sat down and shaved his head, at which point the people started sacrificing their offerings and shaving their heads.'

the chapter of

al-Ahqaf

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

The chapter *al-Ahqaf*⁽¹⁾:



***Ha Mim* [1] This Scripture is sent down from God,
the Almighty, the Wise [2] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 1-2)**

This is one of the seven *hawamim* chapters which begin with Allah's saying: '*Ha Mim*'. They are seven consecutive chapters in the Noble Quran; the first of them is *Ghafir* which starts with the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '*Ha Mim* [1] The revelation of the Book is from Allah, the Mighty, the Knowing, [2]' (*Ghafir*: 1-2), that is, He Who is All Knowing of that which benefits you and nothing from you is hidden from Him. The second is the chapter of *Fussilat*; Allah *the Almighty* starts it with His saying: '*Ha Mim* [1] A revelation from the Beneficent, the Merciful Allah, [2]' (*Fussilat*: 1-2), then comes the chapter of *ash-Shura* which begins with the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '*Ha Mim* [1] *Ain Sin Qaf* [2] Thus does Allah, the Mighty, the Wise, reveal to you, and (thus He revealed) to those before you, [3]' (*ash-Shura*: 1-3);

(1) The chapter of *al-Ahqaf* is a Meccan one, that is, it was revealed before *Hijra* of Prophet Muhammad; it consists of 35 verses. It is related by Al-'Awfi and Ibn Abu Talha from Ibn 'Abbas that it is Meccan, and this is also the opinion of Al-Hasan, Mujahid, 'Jahid, Qatada and the majority of scholars. It is related from Ibn 'Abbas and Qatada that they said: 'It contains one Medinan verse, that is, it was revealed after *Hijra* of Prophet Muhammad, which is Allah's saying: 'Say, 'Have you thought: what if this Quran really is from Allah...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 10). See *Ibn Al-Jawzi, Zad Al-Masir*.

then comes the chapter *az-Zukhruf*, Allah *the Almighty* opens it with His saying: ‘*Ha Mim* [1] I swear by the Book that makes things clear, [2]’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 1-2); then comes the chapter of *ad-Dukhan* which begins with the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘*Ha Mim* [1] I swear by the Book that makes manifest (the truth), [2]’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 1-2); then follows *al-Jathiya* which starts with the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘*Ha Mim* [1] This Scripture is sent down from Allah *the Almighty* the Wise, [2]’ (*al-Jathiya*: 1-2), and finally comes the chapter of *al-Ahqaf*, which starts with the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘*Ha Mim* [1] This Scripture is sent down from Allah *the Almighty* the Wise, [2]’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 1-2). We notice that these chapters all begin in the same way, affirming that ‘*ha mim*’ and the other discrete letters are sent down by Allah *the Almighty* and they are a revelation that only He *the Almighty* knows. They are also part of the Bestowal from on high like the rest of the Noble Quran and the rest of the clear verses. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* once says: ‘*Ha Mim* [1] A revelation from the Beneficent, the Merciful Allah, [2]’ (*Fussilat*: 1-2) meaning that they themselves are bestowed from on high. In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘*Ha Mim* [1] I swear by the Book that makes things clear [2]’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 1-2) meaning that these discrete letters, i.e. *Ha Mim* and this Noble Quran are clear and obvious in meaning. Both of them are revealed from Allah *the Almighty* Who says: ‘Surely We revealed it on a blessed night...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 3). We believe that these verses come from Allah *the Almighty*; those whose meanings we know and those whose meanings we do not know. This is because Allah *the Almighty* wants to guard every point of faith with something that is seen. This is because faith is only with regards to unseen matters, and not that which is witnessed by us. For example, it is not right to say: ‘we believe that right now we are sitting with brothers in Masjid Al-Firdaws having a lesson.’ However, we say that we believe that Allah *the Almighty* exists and that paradise is true. It is from Allah’s Mercy and Kindness towards us that He protects faith in unseen matters with matters that are seen so that we can take a proof from that which is seen by us for the truthfulness of that which is unseen. Therefore, these letters whose meanings we do not know were sent down for with wisdom for a profound reason. Take the example of the Night Journey and Ascension and you will find an unseen matter being protected by that which is seen. How? You know that Prophet

Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* was exposed to much harm and he and his believing followers, were oppressed; the last of this was in Ta'if where the people abused him so much that what he suffered really troubled him. He sat and had an intimate conversation with his Lord and he complained to Him *Glorified is He* about the harshness of these people and he asked Him for victory. After this came the event of the Night Journey and Ascension, and it is as if it was a journey to relieve Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* and a message to him saying: 'O Muhammad, if the people of the earth are harsh with you then I will honour you among the creatures of the heavens, and I will take you to a place that no one before you was ever taken to and I will show you some of My signs that no one before you ever saw.' The one who reflects on the progress of this journey will find that Allah *the Almighty* used the Night Journey to pave the way for the Ascension, as He made the Night Journey an earthly sign; a sign that is witnessed and whose details and dimensions are known. Many of the people of Mecca make this journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, so a rational proof can be established for whoever does not believe in it. Therefore when his people denied him, they said: 'Do you claim that you went to Jerusalem in one night when we go there riding our camels for a month?'⁽¹⁾ Then they asked him *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* to describe Jerusalem for them and to give them some of the landmarks along the way. If they had been certain of this journey, they would not have asked Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* this. They therefore wanted to undermine him *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*, but Allah *the Almighty* helped His Messenger and placed in front of him a detailed picture of Jerusalem. Then Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* started describing it for them. He told them about their caravan⁽²⁾ which was on the way from

(1) See *Al-Baqa'i*, Nazhm Ad-Durar; see also As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 6/204; he attributed it to Abu Ya'la and Ibn 'Asakir from Umm Hani'.

(2) In his *Dala'il An-Nubuwwa*, Al-Bayhaqi (2/356) mentioned that Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Then I was taken and I passed by a camel belonging to Quraysh in such-and-such place. They had lost one of their camels and then so-and-so gathered it so I gave them the greetings of peace and some of them said: 'This is the voice of Muhammad.' Then I met my Companions before dawn in Mecca. Indeed it is a sign that I am telling you that I passed by a camel belonging to =

trading, and that it was in such-and-such place carrying such-and-such. When their trade caravans arrived, they found them as Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* had described. Therefore, it is possible to establish a proof for the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* in the Night Journey to be a precursor for the Ascension which is a heavenly journey that was not shown to anyone and for which it is not possible to establish a rational proof. However, the One Who altered universal laws for Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* with regards to the Night Journey is fully able to alter those same laws with regards to the Ascension. Therefore, He made the unseen event that has a proof to be a precursor for the unseen event that does not have a proof. Furthermore, what they said when they objected to Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* was: 'How, when we go there on our camels in a month?' This statement of theirs benefits us with regards to refuting the claims of so-called intellectuals and philosophers who say that the Night Journey was in spirit and not body. I say to them: if the Night Journey had been in spirit, the disbelievers of Mecca would have said this. They only said it because they knew that it was a fact that took place by both the spirit and the body and that Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* went there and traversed those distances. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* makes their tongues articulate that which supports the truth without them noticing, a point which affirms their stubborn opposition and stultification just as the Jews did when the direction for prayer was changed. Allah *the Almighty* knew what they were going to say and He informed Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* of it. He *the Almighty* says: 'The fools among the people will say: What has turned them from their *qibla* which they had?' (*al-Baqara*: 142) Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* declared this verse

= *you in such-and-such place. They had lost one of their camels and then so-and-so gathered it, and in their journey they are dismounting in such-and-such place and they will reach you on such-and-such day. They will be led by a camel which will be carrying a black haircloth and two black sacks.'* When the day came, the people watched and looked, even though the caravan was still half a day away until it arrived being led by the camel that Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* has described. *Al-Bayhaqi* said: 'This is an authentic chain of narrations.'

and recited it publicly, but despite that, they still said it. If they had had just a little bit of religious, not worldly, discernment they would have refrained from saying it.

Another example of this is Allah's saying: '...Do not spend upon those who are with the Messenger of Allah...' (*al-Munafiqun*: 7). The True Lord made their tongues articulate it without them noticing. The same goes for the verses of the Noble Quran that contain something seen and something unseen, as we take the seen as proof for the truthfulness of the unseen. We take the verses that are clear in meaning as proof for the verses that have discrete letters and the meaning of which we do not know and into which we cannot delve any further. We say: 'Allah knows best as to their significance.' However, they are true and they are from Allah *the Almighty* that is, they were sent down as all the other verses were sent down, but their meaning is unclear. This is why the True Lord *the Almighty* gives an indication of this matter that distinguishes between *Ha Mim* and Allah's saying: 'I swear by the Book that makes things clear,' (*az-Zukhruf*: 2). The meaning of *Ha Mim* is obscure, while Allah's saying: 'I swear by the Book that makes things clear,' (*az-Zukhruf*: 2) is clear and obvious in meaning. Thus, He made all verses that are clear in meaning to be connected (read as words) from the first 'In the Name of Allah, The All-Merciful, The Dispenser of Mercy' in the chapter of *al-Fatiha* to Allah's saying: 'From among the jinn and the men,' (*an-Nas*: 6). The Quran in general is based on connection except for these fourteen discrete letters which are based on stopping (to be read as individual letters). Thus, you read: (*alif, lam, mim*) and (*ha mim*), and it is as if this stopping is an indication from The True Lord *the Almighty* that you must not pronounce these letters in the same way you pronounce the Noble Quran because they are something which is distinct. It is true that they all come from the same source and they all come from Allah *the Almighty*, but stop at these letters and consign their meaning to the One Who sent them down. He *the Almighty* has taken exclusive possession over them in order to make our faith in the unseen continue and to have us constantly connected to it, in faith and in submission. Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* explains this matter by saying: 'I am not saying that *alif lam mim* is a letter, but rather *alif* is a

letter, *lam* is a letter and *mim* is a letter.⁽¹⁾ Thus it is as if this letter, in and of itself, has a reference, and that it has a meaning that we should remain silent about, and if not, then these letters would not have been based on stopping. As long as they are pronounced differently from the remaining verses of the Quran, then they must be distinct because they must contain secrets, and it is for us to wonder about what that is not in our hands. We also notice that the letters in the Arabic language are divided into those that are fixed and those that have a particular meaning. *Kaf*, for example, is a letter that is fixed, meaning that it forms part of a word. It does not have an independent meaning in *kataba* (to write), but when it is joined to the other letters, it conveys the meaning of *kataba*. As for the *kaf* in Allah's saying: '...Nothing like a likeness of Him...' (*ash-Shura*: 11), it indicates resemblance. Likewise, *ba'* is a fixed letter in *kataba*, but it indicates a vow in our saying *bi Allah*. Likewise, the discrete letters that appear at the beginning of some chapters are fixed in the way they are pronounced, but they carry meanings when they are said by the One Who knows their meanings, Allah *the Almighty*. He *Glorified is He* may show these meanings to some of His slaves, and thus they understand meanings from them. This is why we say when commenting on them: 'Allah knows best as to their significance,' because our discussion of them is merely independent reasoning and an attempt to understand. I said that these letters are fourteen from the twenty-eight letters of the alphabet which means that they comprise half of all the Arabic letters. However, they have been chosen in an ordered, precise manner, not randomly. From the first nine letters we have *alif* and *ha'*; and from the last nine letters we have seven, which are the opposite of the first nine, leaving only *waw* and *fa'*. Therefore, they do not have a specific system, but a rather, a deliberate design for a deliberate purpose. Then, from the ten letters remaining in the middle, the ones that have no diacritical marks are chosen, while the ones that do are left. So, we have *ra'* but not *zay*; *sin* but not *shin*; *Ta'* but not *dad*; *ta'* but not *za'* and *'ain* but not *ghain*. If someone were to say: 'How can the letters have diacritical points

(1) See *At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2835*; he said: 'This is an authentic, good Hadith with only one transmitter, from the Hadith of Ibn Mas'ud.' See *Al-Bayhaqi, Shu'ab Al-Iman, Hadith no. 1928*; see also *Abu Na'im, Ma'rifat As-Sahaba, Hadith no. 4012*.

when they did not appear until the age of the Umayyad Caliphate?’ I say: ‘Their Lord and their Speaker, the One Who articulates them, knows what will become of them, as they are all within His Sublime Knowledge. This is why we stop at them and accept them with the perfection that their Speaker placed them in, for they, as I have said, are like the teeth of a key which opens for you. If you change the key, it will not open. Therefore, everything in the Noble Quran has been placed for a reason even in recitation. Whether it is the learned person who knows the meaning or the illiterate person who does not, you find that recitation is of two types: recitation of reflection and worship and recitation of extraction for which you should use your intellect. If you are reciting for worship, then beware of using your intellect. Take the word or the letters according to the significance of the One Who says it. When you come with a meaning based on your own capacity, you will limit Allah’s Perfection and His Unlimited Perfections. Therefore, we find that those who memorise the Noble Quran quickest are those who read it without stopping and pondering over its meaning. Rather, they read it as it is, with or without understanding. Allah says: ‘...is sent down...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 2) meaning that the One Who sent down ‘*Ha Mim*’ also sent down: ‘...this Scripture...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 2), i.e. the Noble Quran: ‘...from Allah the Almighty the Wise’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 2). Reflect here on the description of wisdom, as everything has been sent down with wisdom, even the letters of which we do not know any meaning.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

مَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى
وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَمَّا أُنذَرُوا مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٣﴾

It was for a true purpose and a specific term that We created heaven and earth and everything in between, yet those who deny the truth ignore the warning they have been given [3] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 3)

Allah’s saying: ‘It was for a true purpose...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 3) means that He *the Almighty* did not create everything in vain. Rather, He has created according to an exact, precise system that does not change. I have said that the truth is

something fixed, meaning that it does not change. It is thus crystal clear that He *the Almighty* has created everything for a purpose. For this reason, look at the sky, for example; Allah *the Almighty* created it without pillars. It has been like that since Allah *the Almighty* created it and it will remain stable until the Hour is established, upon this firmness and in accordance with the truth with which it was created. The same goes for the sun. It has never needed maintenance or spare parts and it has never been broken or damaged. Why? It is because it has been created in accordance with truth and justice, which never change. Since its inception, the universe has been created in accordance with wisdom, and had it not been created from the very beginning in accordance with wisdom, it would have been subject to damage and defectiveness. Therefore, the heavens and the earth, from the very beginning, were created in accordance with truth, an absolute truth that was not preceded by falsehood or by another creation that was then modified. Rather, they have been like this from the very beginning. This is like what I said previously regarding Allah's saying when He was debating the enemies of Islam: '...And made lowest the word of those who disbelieved; and the word of Allah, that is the highest...' (*at-Tawba*: 40).

In the first instance, Allah *the Almighty* makes it utterly low, while Allah's Cause, of course, has always remained supreme. Therefore He did not say that He made Allah's Cause supreme because it has never been anything less than supreme such that Allah *the Almighty* would then make it supreme. Therefore, falsehood is brought about while truth remains truth in essence, firmly established ever since Allah *the Almighty* created it. Allah's saying: '...And a specific term...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 3) refers to a known time, which is the Day of Resurrection, as He *the Almighty* did not create the creation and then leave it to its own devices. Rather, there is a defined term, which is the Resurrection, the Day on which this established universe will change and everything in it will be destroyed and demolished. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'On the day when the earth shall be changed into a different earth and the heavens (as well)...' (*Ibrahim*: 48). That is the Day when the sun will be overthrown and the moon will disappear, and all means of living on earth will be destroyed. As for in the Hereafter, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And the earth shall beam with the light of its Lord...' (*az-Zumar*: 69). This is because there will not be any sun or moon. In the life of this world, you live according to means

and causes. As for the Hereafter, you live according to the Establisher of Causes, Allah *the Almighty*. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...Yet those who deny the truth ignore the warning they have been given,’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 3) meaning the deniers of the Truth will turn away on that Day. I said before that the word ‘warning’ means to instil fear of something before it happens, and it is one manifestation of Allah’s Mercy and Kindness towards His slaves and which clearly indicates His *Glorified is He* Eagerness for their salvation. The one who warns you about evil before it happens is doing you a favour. Therefore, it is from Allah’s Mercy towards mankind that He has sent Messengers to them to bring glad tiding and to warn them. In the same way, He has sent down the Books and explained the consequences. However, what do you do about those who turn away from this warning and do not pay attention to it? This is why in the chapter of *ar-Rahman*, the True Lord *the Almighty* made a warning, saying: ‘The flames of fire and smoke will be sent on you two, then you will not be able to defend yourselves. [35] Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? [36]’ (*ar-Rahman*: 35-36) Instilling fear regarding these kinds of punishment is a blessing because when you fear the consequence you will not commit the action that leads to it. As they say in medicine: ‘prevention is better than cure.’ Likewise, distancing oneself from disobedience is better than suffering the consequences of it.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ
 أَتُنُونِي بِكِتَابٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا أَوْ أَثَرَةٍ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٤﴾

Say [Prophet], ‘Consider those you pray to other than God: show me which part of the earth they created or which share of the heavens they own; bring me a previous scripture or some vestige of divine knowledge if what you say is true’ [4] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 4)

The True Lord *the Almighty* wants to affirm that those who have taken other than Allah *the Almighty* as protectors have taken them without any preceding perfection or preceding benefit. They have taken idols as gods and worshipped them besides Allah, even though they made them with their own

hands. This is why Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said to his people, as Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...Do you worship what you hew out?’ (*as-Saffat*: 95) and ‘...Consider those you pray to other than Allah...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 4) meaning inform me, if you have really given thought, inform me of: ‘...What they created...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 4) referring to these claimed deities ‘...Which part of the earth...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 4). Earth is mentioned first because it is where they reside and where they engage in their activity. Allah’s saying: ‘...Or which share of the heavens they own...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 4) means that they did not participate with Allah *the Almighty* in the process of creation. The True Lord *the Almighty* is the One Who has declared: ‘I am the Creator of the heavens and the earth.’ This declaration has been heard by these stubborn resisters, but has anyone objected to it? Has anyone come forward and claimed that he created the universe?

Therefore, if Allah *the Almighty* had any partner in creation, then let him declare himself. As a matter of fact, intellect states that claims are established for the one who makes them as long as no one objects. The True Lord *the Almighty* says: ‘There is no god but Me, and no creator besides Me’, and we have not heard anyone objecting to this statement. Therefore, it belongs to Allah Alone and He has no partner and no contender. If you were to reflect on the creation and the wisdom behind it, you would know that He *the Almighty* Alone, and no one else is fully capable of this marvellous, unique achievement. The True Lord *the Almighty* has created the small and the large, the fat and the thin; and despite this, you find that the small have all the characteristics of the large. The elephant eats and moves and so does the mosquito. Indeed, maybe you are able to gain control over an elephant, but you are not able to gain control over a mosquito. This is why Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...Surely those whom you call upon besides Allah cannot create fly, though they should all gather for it, and should the fly snatch away anything from them, they could not take it back from...’ (*al-Hajj*: 73). Indeed, have you ever been able to retrieve what a fly has taken from your food? Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...Weak are the invoker and the invoked.’ (*al-Hajj*: 73) One of the manifestations of greatness in the creation is that Allah has subjugated the entire universe to our service. If He *Glorified is He* had not subjugated them for us, we would have no power over them. You are amazed when you see a small child leading a camel and carrying things on it, and the camel obeys him. At the same time, you have no

power over the flea and you cannot control it, and it may harm you and keep you up all night. Why? It is because the Creator has subjugated this but He has not subjugated that. Therefore, the greatness of the creation is found in subjugation. This is why Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Do they not see that We have created cattle for them, out of what Our hands have wrought, so they are their masters? [71] And We have subjected them to them, so some of them they have to ride upon, and some of them they eat [72]’ (*Ya Sin*: 71-72).

When you reflect on Allah’s creation, you find greatness in everything, large and small, and this is why opponents would criticise the True Lord *the Almighty* for talking about the mosquito, the fly, and the spider. Then Allah *the Almighty* responded to them: ‘Surely Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable—(that of) a gnat or anything above that...’ (*al-Baqara*: 26). Scholars said: ‘Anything above it’ means, ‘less than that,’ which means microbes and viruses and tiny creations that cannot be seen by the naked eye. This is why we find the True Lord *the Almighty* challenging them: ‘...Surely those whom you call upon besides Allah cannot create fly, though they should all gather for it...’ (*al-Hajj*: 73).

As for the saying of Allah: ‘...Bring me a previous scripture...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 4), it means something before the Noble Quran that you were informed of. Allah’s saying: ‘...Or some vestige of divine knowledge...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 4) means a remnant of knowledge that has been transmitted from those before you. As for the saying of Allah, ‘If what you say is true,’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 4), it means ‘offer evidence of the truthfulness of your claims that they are gods and that they partook, with the True Lord *the Almighty* in the matter of creation.’

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّن يَدْعُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَنْ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُ
لَهُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَهُمْ عَنْ دُعَائِهِمْ غَفْلُونَ

Who could be more wrong than a person who calls on those other than God, those who will not answer him till the Day of Resurrection, those who are unaware of his prayers [5] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 5)

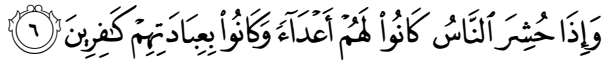
The saying of Allah, ‘...Who could be more wrong than...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 5) is a question that states that there is no one more astray than the person who

calls on, besides Allah, those who do not respond to him. Not now, not in the future and especially not on the Day of Resurrection, and he knows that the god he calls on does not respond to him. Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who is worshipped in truth, and He is the Great, the Exalted. This is why when the disbeliever is afflicted with adversity; he does not seek refuge in his false gods. He never calls out and says: 'O Hubal!' He does not say it in times of adversity because he knows that Hubal cannot hear him and will never answer him, and he will not deceive himself and lie to himself in this situation. Thus you see him seeking refuge in Allah and calling on Him even though he does not believe in Him. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And when distress afflicts you in the sea, away go those whom you call on except He...' (*al-Isra'*: 67). Indeed, in the moment of distress the disbeliever looks for the True Lord Who is fully capable of bringing him benefit and causing him harm, so he says: 'O Lord!' but once Allah has relieved him of his distress, he returns to his disbelief and his stubborn resistance. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And when affliction touches a man, he calls on Us, whether lying on his side or sitting or standing; but when We remove his affliction from him, he passes on as though he had never called on Us on account of an affliction that touched him...' (*Yunus*: 12). Why? It is because religion, for these people, has become 'fantasy'. They believe in a god but not in a way of Guidance or in any commandments. It does not tell them what to do or not to do. This is why they were false gods, even in being called 'gods' because a god is worshipped and obeyed with regards to its commands and prohibitions. Therefore, this is all a lie and misguidance.

When the True Lord *the Almighty* clarifies this matter for us, He presents it in the form of this question so that we can answer. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Who could be more wrong than...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 5) and we respond: 'No one could be more wrong than this.' Thus, the affirmation is from us and we bear witness to it.

Allah's saying: '...Those who are...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 5) means that the so-called gods are '...Unaware of his prayers.' (*al-Ahqaf*: 5) They are not aware of those who are invoking them.

Then the True Lord *the Almighty* says:



**Those who, when all mankind is gathered, will become
his enemies and disown his worship? [6]
(The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 6)**

Concerning Allah's saying: '...When all mankind is gathered...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 6), it refers to the Day of Resurrection. Allah's saying: '...Will become...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 6) means that these so-called gods are '...Their enemies...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 6). Indeed, in this situation the enmity between these people will manifest itself. Everyone will absolve themselves of everyone else, and they will all curse each other. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'The friends shall on that day be enemies one to another, except those who guard (against evil)' (*az-Zukhruf*: 67). He *the Almighty* also says: 'Gather together those who were unjust and their associates, and what they used to worship [22] Besides Allah, then lead them to the way to hell[23] And stop them, for they shall be questioned [24] What is the matter with you that you do not help each other?[25] Nay! On that day they shall be submissive [26] And some of them shall advance towards others, questioning each other [27] They shall say: Surely you used to come to us from the right side [28] They shall say: Nay, you (yourselves) were not believers; [29] And we had no authority over you, but you were an in ordinate people;[30] So the sentence of our Lord has come to pass against us: (now) we shall surely taste; [31] So we led you astray, for we ourselves were erring [32] So they shall on that day be sharers in the chastisement one with another [33] Surely thus do We deal with the guilty, [34]' (*as-Saffat*: 22-34).

This is a portrayal of the dialogue that takes place between these oppressors and the blame and condemnation that takes place between them such that each one of them accuses the other of being responsible for his crime. We also have Allah's saying: 'And those who disbelieve will say: Our Lord! Show us those who led us astray from among the jinn and the men that we may trample them under our feet so that they may be of the lowest' (*Fussilat*: 29). This is the argument of Satan on the Day of Resurrection. He will say as Allah *the Almighty* clearly states in the Quran: '...And I had no authority over you, except that I called you and you obeyed me, therefore do not blame me but blame yourselves...' (*Ibrahim*: 22). I said that the meaning of '...Authority...'

(*Ibrahim*: 22) is argument, and it is of two types; either an argument to convince you to do something, or power to force you to do something. We do not have both. Allah's saying: '...I cannot be your aider (now) nor can you be my aiders...' (*Ibrahim*: 22) means that these so-called gods cannot respond to the cries of those deniers of the Truth for help. Therefore, on the Day of Resurrection, the enmity between the oppressors, the disbelievers, the worshipper, and the worshipped is clear, and the final abode of all of them is the fire. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Surely you and what you worship besides Allah are the firewood of hell; to it you shall come' (*al-Anbiya*: 98). Some people comment on this verse and say: 'How can this be when there are those who worshipped Jesus? How can Jesus be the fuel of hell?' These people have not noticed that Allah *the Almighty* says that verses to indicate non-humans. He did not say 'who.'

Then the True Lord *the Almighty* says:

وَإِذَا نُتِلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمُ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٧﴾

**When Our revelations are recited to them in all their
clarity, the disbelievers say of the Truth that has
reached them, 'This is clearly sorcery' [7]
(The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 7)**

The meaning of '...In all their clarity...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 7) is that they are obvious and manifest, and despite that, '...The disbelievers say of the Truth that has reached them...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 7) that it is sorcery. They say that about the truth because the *lam* carries the meaning of 'about', or they went to greater lengths, so instead of confronting those who believe in the truth, they confronted the truth itself: '...This is clearly sorcery' (*al-Ahqaf*: 7). Nullifying these claims is simple and easy which is that we say to them: 'If we were to believe that this is magic, and that Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* is bewitched by it, then how come it has not bewitched you as it has bewitched us; thus we put an end to the matter.'

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ إِنِ افْتَرَيْتُهُ فَلَا تَمْلِكُونَ لِي مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا
نُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ كَفَىٰ بِهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٨﴾

Or they say, ‘He has invented it himself.’ Say [Prophet],
‘If I have really invented it, there is nothing you can do
to save me from God. He knows best what you say
amongst yourselves about it; He is sufficient as a witness
between me and you; He is the Most Forgiving, the Most
Merciful’ [8] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 8)

After saying that the Noble Quran is magic and that Prophet Muhammad *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* used it to bewitch his Companions into believing in him, they said: ‘It is an invention made by him *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him*’. Thus Allah responds to them: ‘...Say [O Muhammad]...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 8). Tell them, O Muhammad: ‘...If I have really invented it, there is nothing you can do to save me from Allah...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 8). It means, you would not be able to prevent Allah’s punishment if I had invented something about Him or lied in conveying from Him. This is why Allah *the Almighty* says in another verse that clarifies the matter: ‘And if he had fabricated against Us some of the sayings, [44] We would certainly have seized him by the right hand, [45] Then We would certainly have cut off his aorta[46] And not one of you could have withheld Us from him, [47]’ (*al-Haqqah*: 44-47). So how can Prophet Muhammad *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* lie about Allah *the Almighty* after these words, especially considering that he *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* was known as the Truthful One (*As-Sadiq*) among his people before he was sent with the Message. The people of Quryash (The Quraysh Tribe) never experienced any lie from him. You know the story⁽¹⁾ of the revered Companion Khuzayma ibn Thabit⁽²⁾ *may Allah be pleased with him*

(1) The testimony of Khuzayma in favour of Prophet Muhammad *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him*

(2) He is Khuzayma ibn Thabit ibn Al-Fakih ibn Tha’laba *Al-Ansari* Abu ‘Immara, a Companion, and one of the most honourable of *Al-Aws* in the Age of Ignorance and Islam; he was one of their most courageous. He was a Medinan and he carried the banner of Banu Khattama on the day of the Conquest of Mecca. He lived until the caliphate of ‘Ali ibn Abu Taleb and he was martyred while fighting in the army of ‘Ali=

and Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*. Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* bought a horse from a Jew and the payment was to be delayed. On the scheduled day to make the payment, Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* met him and gave him the payment yet there was no witness, so the Jew took advantage of the opportunity and claimed that he *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* had not paid him for the horse. When Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* spoke to him, the Jew said: 'Bring a witness,' so Khuzayma *may Allah be pleased with him* stood up and said: 'I bear witness, O Messenger of Allah, that you gave the payment for the horse.' The Jew was stunned and he thought that Khuzayma *may Allah be pleased with him* had been there, but he had not seen him. Afterwards, Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* summoned Khuzayma and said to him: 'O Khuzayma, what made you say what you said when you were not there, and you did not witness the matter?' Khuzayma *may Allah be pleased with him* laughed and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, I believe in you when you bring news from the heavens, so would I not believe you regarding a few *dirhams*?' Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* then smiled and gave him a valued rank, and said: 'If Khuzayma bears witness to something, then that is sufficient.'⁽¹⁾ From that day onwards, the testimony of Khuzayma *may Allah be pleased with him* was equivalent to the testimony of two men. This rank was of benefit to the Muslims when it was time to gather the Noble Quran. When they were compiling the Noble Quran in one volume, they would not write down the verse unless they had found it recorded on pieces of cloth, leather, wood, or bones. In addition, two upright witnesses had to testify to its authenticity. They did this until they came to the end of the chapter of *at-Tawba* and they found a verse written,⁽²⁾

= at the Battle of Siffin. Al-Bukhari, Muslim and others related 38 Hadiths from him. He died in the year 37 A.H. See Az-Zirikli, *Al-'Alam*, 2/305.

- (1) See *Al-Bayhaqi, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra*, v.1, with the wording: 'If Khuzayma bears witness to something or bears witness against something, then that is sufficient.' See also Ibn Abu 'Asim, *Al-Ahaad wa Al-Mathani*, Hadith no. 1838; see also Al-Hakim, *Mustadrak*, Hadith no. 2149; *At-Tabarani, Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir*, Hadith no. 2642; according to them the name of the man was Saww' ibn Al-Harith Al-Muharabi.
- (2) It is the verse of: 'Of the believers are men who are true to the covenant which they made with Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 23). Aban ibn Sa'id said: 'I examined the Emigrants=

but it only had one witness; Khuzayma *may Allah be pleased with him*, so they accepted it with only his testimony because his testimony was equivalent to the testimony of two men.

Reflect on the etiquette of conversation; even with those who contravene Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* and with those who openly accuse him of lying. He says to them: '...If I have really invented it...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 8) and if it represents doubt, '...There is nothing you can do to save me from Allah...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 8) meaning that you cannot prevent Allah's Punishment. As for the saying of Allah, '...He knows best what you say amongst yourselves about it...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 8), it refers to their statement that the Noble Quran is fabricated. Allah's saying: '...He is sufficient as a witness between me and you; He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful' (*al-Ahqaf*: 8). He returns the matter to Allah *the Almighty* and consigns it to him, and He is pleased with His witnessing between himself and his enemies, as Allah's witnessing is the testimony of truth and veracity.

This is why Allah *the Almighty* offered His Own Testimony, that is, He *the Most High* bears witness to Himself, 'Allah bears witness that there is no god but He...' (*Al-Imran*: 18). The angels also bear witness which is the testimony of actual witnessing, as do those who are endowed with knowledge, which is the testimony of deduction; Allah *the Almighty* says: '...And (so do) the angels and those possessed of knowledge, maintaining His creation with justice...' (*Al-Imran*: 18). Therefore, in this matter, Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* is unable to bring a witness to his truthfulness in conveying the Quran from Allah, so it suffices to make Allah *the Almighty* a witness between himself and them. This is from the etiquette of conversation that he *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* was refined with, as they accused him of deliberately lying yet he showed them affection. In another place, he responded to them when the True Lord *the Almighty* said on the tongue of His Prophet: '...Say: If I have forged it, on me is my guilt, and I am clear of that

= *and asked them about it and I couldn not find it with any of them. Then I examined the Helpers and asked them about it and I didn not find it with any of them until I found it with Khuzayma ibn Thabit, so I wrote it down.' See At- Tabari, Tafsir, 1/60; see also Ibn Kathir in the introduction to his Tafsir 1/28.*

of which you are guilty,' (*Hud*: 35). Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying, '...He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful,' (*al-Ahqaf*: 8) meaning that it is as if he is showing them compassion and causing their hearts to incline towards him, Thus, despite these false claims the door of forgiveness and mercy is still open in front of them.

Then the True Lord *the Almighty* says ⁽¹⁾:

قُلْ مَا كُنْتُ بِدَعَا مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ وَمَا أَدْرِي مَا يُفْعَلُ بِي وَلَا بِكُمْ إِنِّ
أَنبِئُ إِلَّا مَا يُوْحَىٰ إِلَيَّ وَمَا أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٩﴾

**Say, 'I am nothing new among God's messengers. I do
not know what will be done with me or you; I only
follow what is revealed to me; I only warn plainly' [9]
(The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 9)**

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Say...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 9) means 'tell them, O Prophet Muhammad: '...I am nothing new among Allah's Messengers...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 9). *Bid* (first) is something that is newly invented and for which there is no precedent. An example of this is Allah's saying: 'Wonderful Originator of the heavens and the earth! How could He have a son when He has no consort, and He (Himself) created everything, and He is the Knower of all things?' (*al-An'am*: 101) meaning that He *the Almighty* created them without there being any precedent. We also say that a person is a *mubdi* meaning that he brought something that no one else before him did. The

(1) In his *Asbab An-Nuzul*, Al-Wahidi An-Nisaburi mentioned in (p. 215) the reason for the revelation of this verse and he said: 'Ath-Tha'labi narrated from Abu Saleh that Ibn 'Abbas said: 'When tribulations faced by the Companions of the Prophet intensified, the Prophet saw in his dream that he migrated to a land that had palms, trees and plenty of water. He related this dream to his Companions and the latter took it for a good omen and a harbinger of relief from the harm of the idolaters which they faced. After a while, when they saw that nothing had happened, they said: 'O Messenger of Allah! When are you going to migrate to the land which you saw in your dream?' Prophet Muhammad Allah's peace and blessings be upon him did not answer them, but Allah the Almighty sent down: '...and I do not know what will be done with me or with you...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 9), meaning that I do not know whether or not I am going to move to the place which I saw in my dream. I follow only that which is revealed to me.'

meaning here is: I have not come outside of the standard practice that all the previous Messengers before me came in accordance with, or I am not calling you to anything new. I am not the first Messenger to be met with denial and to be confronted with disbelief, stubborn opposition, and persecution. Rather, all the previous Messengers before me experienced the same thing. They were harmed and they were denied and they were patient until Allah gave them victory, as He *the Almighty* has said: ‘So each We punished for his sin...’ (*al-‘Ankabut*: 40). Allah’s standard practice regarding the previous Messengers was that He granted victory to His Messengers and Prophets over those who denied the Messengers and opposed the call to the Truth. As for the Message of Prophet Muhammad *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* Allah entrusted Muhammad and He entrusted His community to take care of disciplining those who deny the call and oppose it, and to give victory to the truth. This is why He said: ‘Goodness is in me and in my community until the Day of Resurrection.’⁽¹⁾ The significance of this statement is that goodness is in me in an exclusive sense and in my community in a dispersed sense. This means that each generation takes a portion of this goodness. Allah’s saying: ‘...Do not know what will be done with me or you...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 9) means, right now I do not know, but perhaps in the future he will know because of what Allah reveals to him, as was the case with going to war against the disbelievers and calling to Islam openly. When some of those who had become Muslim with the Prophet Muhammad *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* asked to go to war with the disbelievers, he would say to them: ‘I have not been commanded, I have not been commanded.’ When he had emigrated to Medina, he gave them permission to fight. Therefore, he proclaimed Allah’s religion outwardly in Mecca and did not engage in martial combat until he was in Medina, and this was for a specific reason, as Mecca was the hometown of Quraysh and the headquarters of their leadership. The Quraysh held a position of importance and respect among all the Arab tribes because of their position with regards to

(1) In his *Al-Maqasid Al-Hasana*, As-Sakhawi said: ‘Our Sheikh Ibn Hajar Al-‘Asqalani said: ‘I do not know it, but its meaning is sound.’ See *As-Suyuti, Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 1/10; see also *Al-‘Ajluni, Kashf Al-Khafa*’, *Hadith no. 1267*; in his *Al-Fatawa Al-Hadithiyyah*, Ibn Hajar Al-Mekki said: ‘It is not found with this wording.’ I say that it is merely a popular saying among people.’

Allah's Sacred House and their service to those who made pilgrimage to it. Also because Mecca was in the middle of a trade route between Yemen and the Levant in the journeys of winter and summer, it was necessary to take the rank of the Quraysh into consideration and not declare war against them at that time. When we read, for example, the chapter of *al-Fil*: 'And send down (to prey) upon them birds in flocks, [3] Casting against them stones of baked clay, [4] So He rendered them like straw eaten up? [5]' (*al-Fil*: 3-5). If you were to ask why, the chapter of *Quraysh* answers you: 'For the protection of the Quraysh—[1] Their protection during their trading caravans in the winter and the summer, [2]' (*Quraysh*: 1-2) meaning that Allah *the Almighty* did this for the benefit of the Quraysh so that they would continue to have rank and reverence among the Arab tribes, and so that they would remain safe and secure in their trade journeys between Yemen and the Levant. This is why He *the Almighty* says afterwards: 'So let them serve the Lord of this House [3] who feeds them against hunger and gives them security against fear, [4]' (*Quraysh*: 3-4). The meaning of Allah's saying: '...I do not know what will be done with me or you...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 9) is that I do not know whether Allah *the Almighty* will command us to fight these people or whether He will command us to leave Mecca for another place in which we will seek His victory. This is why Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* commanded them afterwards to immigrate to Abyssinia. He said: 'Indeed there is king there under whom no one is oppressed.'⁽¹⁾ It is as if Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* had a map of the world that was around him, and indeed when they went to Abyssinia they were honoured by the Negus, and he protected them when the Quraysh sent 'Amr *may Allah be pleased with him* to request their return. He sent 'Amr *may Allah be pleased with him* back and he sent back the gifts of the Quraysh and he gave security to Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* and his call. Because of this, and everything else, Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* had officiated

(1) In his *As-Sira An-Nabawiyyah*, Ibn Kathir mentioned in (2/4), *As-Suhayli* in *Ar-Rawd Al-Unuf* (2/89) and Ibn Hisham in *As-Sira* (1/221) via Mohamed ibn Ishaq that the Messenger of Allah said: 'If you were to leave and go to the land of Abyssinia, then indeed you will find a king there under whom no one is oppressed, and it will be a land of sincerity for you until Allah gives you an opening.'

him to conduct his marriage to Umm Habiba⁽¹⁾ and when the Negus died, Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* prayed the funeral prayer over him.⁽²⁾

The emigration to Abyssinia was a transitory phase in which the Muslims who were persecuted found protection with this king under whom no one was oppressed, and this was until Allah *the Almighty* gave permission to Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* to immigrate to Medina, where the victory of Islam came and His word was made uppermost. There is wisdom behind the first call being in Mecca and the support and victory of the religion being in Medina because the Quraysh were the chiefs of the Arabs and they had power in the Arabian Peninsula. If victory had come in Mecca then they would have said that it was due to the leadership and power of the Quraysh, which made Islam spread throughout the peninsula and then the world around it. The wisdom behind the first call to Islam being in the ears of these chiefs was to agitate them and to make their actions repugnant, and to invalidate their belief idol-worship. However, the victory was postponed until Medina in order to give victory to the religion through the Emigrants and the Helpers so that no one would think that the tribal solidarity of Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* is what made people believe in Islam. Rather, it is faith in Allah *the Almighty* that created tribal solidarity for Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah's saying: '...I only follow what is revealed to me; I only warn plainly' (*al-Ahqaf*: 9). Look here at the greatness in the personality of Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace*

(1) *Umm Habiba is Ramla bint Abu Sufyan ibn Ummaya, a female Companion and one of the wives of the Prophet Muhammad. She was the sister of Mu'awiya and one of the most eloquent women of Quraysh. She was known for her opinion and discernment. She was born 25 years before the Emigration. Her marriage to Prophet Muhammad was officiated in Abyssinia by the Negus and he gave her four hundred dinars as a bridal gift in the year 7 A.H. (she was 32 years old). She died in the year 44 A.H. at the age of 69. See Az-Zirikli, Al-'Alam, 2/23.*

(2) *'Imran ibn Husayn narrated that the Messenger of Allah said: 'Indeed your brother the Negus has died. Then stand up and pray over him.' He said: 'So we stood up and made rows as is done in a funeral prayer and we prayed over him as the deceased are prayed over.' Narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad (4/439,446), At-Tirmidhi in his Sunnan (1029), and he declared it authentic, and An-Nasa'i in his Sunnan (4/70).*

and blessings be upon him as he is speaking according to what he has. It is as if he is saying: 'If I am referred to I say: I am not like one of you, and I am taken from and I say that I am only a human being like you.' Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* did not bring anything from himself unless it was with regards to a matter for which there was no ruling. If he exercised his independent reasoning in a matter for which there was no ruling and made a mistake before Allah *the Almighty* amended it, he is the one who informs us of this amendment, as in His statement: 'O Prophet! Why do you forbid (yourself) that which Allah has made lawful for you; you seek to please your wives; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful,' (*at-Tahrim*: 1).

Then the True Lord *the Almighty* says:

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَكَفَرْتُمْ بِهِ وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ
عَلَىٰ مِثْلِهِ فَأَمَنَ وَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

Say, 'Have you thought: what if this Quran really is from God and you reject it? What if one of the Children of Israel testifies to its similarity [to earlier scripture] and believes in it, and yet you are too proud to [do the same]? God certainly does not guide evildoers' [10] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 10)

The meaning of: '...Have you thought...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 10) is: inform me if you yourselves have witnessed: '...What if this Quran really is from Allah and you reject it?' (*al-Ahqaf*: 10) The implied answer is: what will happen to you? The known answer is: if this Noble Quran is from Allah *the Almighty* and despite that you disbelieve in it then you will acquire nothing but Allah's wrath in the life of this world and His punishment in the Hereafter. Allah *the Almighty* says: '...What if one of the children of Israel testifies to its similarity [to earlier scripture]...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 10)? The witness who testified to the truthfulness of the Noble Quran and that it is from Allah *the Almighty* was 'Abdullah ibn Salam *may Allah be pleased with him*. He was one of the Jewish rabbis who became Muslim and testified to the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* and the Noble Quran. Allah's saying: '...to its similarity...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 10) means the resemblance

of the Noble Quran to the previous books such as the Torah and the Gospel, as it is like them because it is from Allah *the Almighty* and it calls to what they called to such as worshipping Allah and affirming His oneness. Just as the Torah was sent down to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and the Gospel was sent down to 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*, the Noble Quran was sent down to Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* and his description is established with them in the Torah.

That is why he used to say concerning Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*: 'By Allah, I recognised him when I saw him, just as I recognise my children and yet my recognition of Muhammad is greater.' Surely, he knew him *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* from the signs that were mentioned in their Books.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And when there came to them a Book from Allah verifying that which they have and aforetime they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieve, but when there came to them (Prophet) that which they did not recognize, they disbelieved in him' (*al-Baqara*: 89). They used to pray for victory against the disbelievers before the revelation of the Noble Quran. Why did they disbelieve in the Prophet then? They thought that Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* would pull leadership and authority right from their hands.

Further, Allah *Glorified is He* also says about them: 'And they forgot a portion of what they were reminded' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13). If they were to be excused because of their forgetfulness, they certainly had no excuse to conceal the Book or to alter it. Indeed, there were some who: 'Write the book with their hands and then say: This is from Allah so that they may take for it a small price; therefore woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn' (*al-Baqara*: 79). Therefore, the Jews forgot, concealed, altered, and changed their Book. Allah *Glorified is He* would inevitably make them slip into things that show their deeds and let the truth come to light.

For example, with regards to the issue of whom Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* sacrificed, they claim it was Ishaq ('Isaac) and not Ismael (Ishmael) *peace be upon them*. In response, we say, 'If 'Isaac was the one sacrificed, then why were the rites of sacrifice and the stoning of devils legislated in Arabia

and not where 'Isaac lived?' Let them refer to their Books. Allah *Glorified is He* said to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* in the Torah, in the twenty-fourth chapter: 'O Abraham, take your only son and climb mount Moriah and offer him as a sacrifice to Allah.' Was 'Isaac the only child? In the very next chapter, He says: 'Isaac was born when Ishmael was fourteen years old.' Therefore, what they say is in complete contradiction to what is in their Books. This allows the truth to come to light and establish the proof against them.

Allah *Glorified is He* asks, 'Will they not be wrong if such a witness believed in it, and yet they were too proud to accept the truth?' We have mentioned the story of how 'Abdullah ibn Salam *may Allah be pleased with him* embraced Islam. He came to Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* and said: 'O Prophet of Allah, love of Islam has been inculcated in my heart, but the Jews are a people of slander. If they knew this, they would say things about me that are not true, so ask them about me before I openly declare my Islam. When they had gathered around Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* he asked them, 'What do you say about 'Abdullah ibn Salam?' They said, 'He is superior among us and the son of the most superior among us.' They praised him but at that point 'Abdullah ibn Salam *may Allah be pleased with him* said, 'I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah,' they said that he is a liar and the most-wicked person. Ibn Salam *may Allah be pleased with him* laughed and said, 'Did I not tell you, O Prophet of Allah, that they were a people of slander.'

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse saying that certainly He *the Almighty* does not guide evildoers. These words have solved problems for us and clarified the meaning of guidance. Some people wonder why Allah *Glorified is He* punishes those for whom he has decreed disbelief and misguidance. This is a common fallacy and if the question were logical, they would wonder why He rewards the obedient when He has written obedience for them.'

We clarified this matter before and said that Allah *Glorified is He* guides both the believer and the disbeliever and the obedient and the disobedient in the sense of showing the true and right path. He *Glorified is He* has shown everyone the straight path and whoever takes this guidance and goes according to its light deserves more from Allah. He *the Almighty* says: 'Just as

for those who are (willing to be) guided, He increases their (ability to follow His) guidance and causes them to grow in Allah-consciousness' (*Muhammad*: 17). This type of guidance, the guidance of assistance and enabling success, is viewed as the second type of guidance.

Thus, when Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah certainly does not guide evildoers,' (*al-Ahqaf*: 10), He means that He does not grant them the guidance of support. This is why He says about the people of Thamud: 'And as to Thamud, We showed them the right way, but they chose error above guidance.' (*Fussilat*: 17) Allah *Glorified is He* showed them the right path, but they preferred error and misguidance over guidance, so He assisted them, just as He assisted the people of guidance with their guidance. We gave an example before to clarify this matter. We said that if you were to ask a traffic officer for directions, he would show you the way and when you take his advice and thank him, he would then give you more advice and maybe even go with you until you reach your destination.

Therefore, the reason why Allah *Glorified is He* does not guide evil-doing people is because of their evil-doing. He does not guide the iniquitous because of their iniquity and He does not guide the disbelievers because of their disbelief.

Before moving on from this verse, we should mention here that 'Abdullah ibn Salam *may Allah be pleased with him* before declaring his Islam, asked Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* about three things to increase his certainty in the truthfulness of his *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* Message. He asked, 'What is the sign of the Last Hour?' Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'A fire coming out of the east gathering people in the west.' Then 'Abdullah asked, 'What is the first thing that the people of paradise eat?' 'The caudate (extra lobe of the fish-liver),' Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* answered. He said: 'When will a child be like his father or his mother?' whereupon he *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'If the man's discharge proceeds, the child is to be a man and if the woman's discharge proceeds, the child is to be a woman.'⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by Ahmad and Ibn Hibban

Later, this has been confirmed by modern science and research which proved the inimitability of the noble Prophetic Hadith and the veracity of the Message of Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*. Men and women share in the process of reproduction. Some people imagine that the process of intercourse is what produces a child, but it is only a means of stimulation that enables the man to discharge the semen. As for the fluid of the woman, the ovum that embraces the sperm has set and defined times in which it descends, regardless of the process of intercourse. It is already there and if the process of intercourse coincides with the ovum descending, then the fluid of the man competes to get to it while it is in its place. Therefore, the ovum has no role in determining the gender, as modern science has confirmed.

When we understand the linguistic meaning of the verb proceed, we will find that it confirms that the Prophetic Hadith agree with science. 'To proceed' means that the two competitors set off from the same place. Therefore, the point of emission is the same, i.e. the man's penis. Thus, we understand that the competition is between the sperm that represents the male and the sperm that represents the female and whichever one is first, the gender of the foetus is determined. Therefore, the role of the woman is to nurse what she receives from the man.

It is true that the Noble Quran is a Book of Creed and a way and legislation. It is also a miraculous Book that touches upon universal matters to the extent that people with varying levels of intellect can understand, as it was sent down to an unlettered community. Would it have been possible to tell this community that the earth is spherical? If we had said that at that time, they would have declared it a lie. That is why the Noble Quran envelops these universal realities and postpones their understanding until intellects have matured and are capable of grasping these realities. It is left to time and events to explain these universal signs and find what supports them in Allah's speech.

Have the Arabs who received the Noble Quran understood the meaning of the statement of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'And you see the mountains, you think them to be solid, and they shall pass away as the passing away of the cloud' (*an-Naml*: 88)? We actually see the mountains as firmly established. Thus, the meaning of them passing away is that they rotate due to the rotation of the

earth. We read the verse, ‘He makes the night cover the day and makes the day overtake the night’ (*az-Zumar*: 5). Therefore, the earth is a spheroid object that rotates. Allah *Glorified is He* has given us these meanings in an enveloped manner so as not to shock people and make them run away from the Noble Quran.

This entire universe, with its universal signs explain the meaning of the verse: ‘We will soon show them Our signs in the Universe and in their own souls until it will become quite clear to them that it is the truth’ (*Fussilat*: 53). This means that the meaning of this verse will remain established, and that signs will prove it until the Last Hour. These signs will manifest themselves in accordance with what suits the intellects of mankind and the development of their sciences and possibilities.

The Noble Quran explained the matter of man’s creation, clarifying the meaning of Prophet Muhammad’s words: ‘If the man’s discharge proceeds, the child is too be a man.’ Allah *Glorified is He* says ‘Was he not a small seed in the seminal elements?’ (*al-Qiyama*: 37) The sperm drop contains the organism that carries the male or the female; and the semen is the liquid containing sperm. Semen comes from the man, not the woman as confirmed by science and this is why the scientists have called it XY and XX, i.e. both are from the man.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* states:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْ كَانَ خَيْرًا مَا سَبَقُونَا إِلَيْهِ وَإِذْ لَمْ يَهْتَدُوا بِهِ فَسَيَقُولُونَ هَذَا إِنْكَافٌ قَدِيمٌ

Those who disbelieve say of the believers, ‘If there were any good in this Quran, they would not have believed in it before we did,’ and, since they refuse to be guided by it, they say, ‘This is an ancient fabrication’ [11]
(The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 11)

The speakers here are those who disbelieve, and who address those who believe saying, ‘if there were any good in Islam and the Quran, they would not have believed in it before they did.’ The scholars have an observation on

this statement. They say that this statement could be a confrontation between the disbelievers and the believers and it was said to them while they were present: 'If there were any good, you would not have believed in it before us.' Further, it could mean the other way around that they were absent from the gathering in which this statement was made: 'If there were any good, they would not have believed in it before we did.' Thus, the context is balanced to indicate both prepositions of the verb 'say', i.e. to and about and thereby give us the meaning of harming in confrontation and harming, whilst one is absent. It gathers them both in one passage.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse saying what those who disbelieve say since they refuse to be guided by it. They say, 'This is an ancient fabrication.' They claimed that the Quran was the most repulsive and well-known lie and fabrication.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* states:

وَمِنْ قَبْلِهِ كَتَبُ مُوسَىٰ إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ
لِّسَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّيُنْذِرَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٢﴾

**Yet the scripture of Moses was revealed before it as a guide
and a mercy, and this is a scripture confirming it in the
Arabic language to warn those who do evil and bring good
news for those who do good [12] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 12)**

Allah *Glorified is He* declares that the Torah of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was revealed before the Noble Quran as a guide and a mercy for its adherents in its time. Next, He *the Almighty* refers to the Noble Quran as it confirms the previous Books that were revealed from on high before the revelation of the Quran. Allah *Glorified is He* makes it clear elsewhere in the Quran that the Quran came to confirm the truth of all these Books and determine what is true therein. He *Glorified is He* sent the Noble Quran in Arabic language to warn and make evildoers fear the consequences of their evildoing and to bring glad tidings and inform those, who do the good, of good news before its time.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* states:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَمُوا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

**For those who say, ‘Our lord is God,’ and then follow the straight path there is no fear, nor shall they grieve [13]
(The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 13)**

This verse has an equivalent in the chapter of *Fussilat* where Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘(But) behold, as for those who say, “Our Lord is Allah,” and then steadfastly pursue the right way – upon them do angels often descend, (saying, “Fear not and grieve not, but receive the glad tiding of that paradise which has been promised to you!” (*Fussilat*: 30)

Indeed, no fear or grieve shall they, i.e. the believers have. What fear would afflict them, what grief would befall them while they have said that Allah *Glorified is He* is their Lord, which is the core of the creed? Further, they have not said it as a hollow statement. Rather, they have backed it up with actions that are in accordance with this faith.

They then follow the straight path of the commands and prohibitions of the creed. Thus, to follow the path is to go along the straight path that has been drawn by the One you believe in. This act of following the path helps you with your daily activity as well as the activity of others with you. Straightness represents the shortest path that takes you to your destination. That is why we said that guidance carries you and takes you to your destination. Guidance is not a burden; rather, it is a carrier which takes you to Allah *the Almighty*; He *Glorified is He* says: ‘These are on guidance from their Lord’ (*Luqman*: 5). The Divine Guidance carries them, not the other way around.

Therefore, whoever says that Allah *Glorified is He* is their Lord and then stands firm upon it in their daily activity, Allah assures that they have no fear or grief. In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* does not postpone this assurance until the Hereafter. Rather, He gives glad tidings through the angels as He *the Almighty* says in the chapter of *Fussilat*: ‘The angels descend upon them, saying: Fear not, nor be grieved, and receive good news of the garden which you were promised’ (*Fussilat*: 30).

The angels descend upon them at the time of death to give them glad tidings and to reassure them that they have no fear and no grief. Fear is to

expect that something will harm and hurt you, while grief is the mourning and pain of losing something beloved. They are safe from both of these. As long as that is the case, then do not fear your enemies as they will never gain anything from you. The believers have something to say with courage to their enemies, 'Say: Do you await for us but one of two most excellent things? And we await for you that Allah will afflict you with punishment from Himself or by our hands. So wait; we too will wait with you' (*at-Tawba*: 52).

This means if we, believers, confront them, i.e. disbelievers, on the battlefield, we wait either victory or martyrdom after being killed and we welcome either of the two outcomes. As for them, they are waiting for Allah *Glorified is He* to afflict them with punishment, either directly from Him or by our hands. Confidence and certainty without the slightest doubt fill the hearts of Muslims regarding this issue.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* states:

أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

**They are the people of Paradise, there to remain
as a reward for what they were doing [14]
(The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 14)**

Allah *Glorified is He* indicates that those who said that Allah is their Lord and followed the right path are the people of paradise. He informs us of their reward and the consequence of their faith and uprightness. They are the people of paradise, which means that they are the owners or that they are the companions, i.e. there is a relationship of love, mutual understanding and inclination between them. They are inclined towards the other and they yearn for each other.

A companion is the one whom you choose and whose morals, character, and manners agree with yours. These people who have said that Allah is their Lord and then followed the right path have chosen paradise and it has chosen and taken them as companions and sincere friends.

It has been mentioned that paradise yearns for its people, waits for them and asks about them, just as the fire yearns for its people and waits for them.

There is nothing strange about this, as every creation has its language of expression even inanimate objects. Allah says: 'He knows the prayer of each one and its glorification' (*an-Nur*: 41). Each of them glorifies in its own language that you do not understand because it is not your language. However, the One Who created them gave them a specific language that they communicate with.

The Noble Quran informs us that the ant communicated with its species and that they understood one another. Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* heard them speaking and he thanked Allah for giving him the blessing of being able to understand these creatures. That is why we have rectified the statement that the pebbles praised Allah *Glorified is He* in the hands of Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* because the pebbles naturally glorify Allah even if they were in the hands of Abu Lahab. Thus, we should say that he *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* heard the pebbles praising Allah while in his hands.

Allah *Glorified is He* says that they are the people of paradise who will abide eternally therein. That is because the blessings of paradise are everlasting, eternal and never come to an end. They are not disrupted like the blessings of the life of this world which are disrupted because those blessings of the Hereafter will not miss you, nor will you miss them.

Allah *Glorified is He* says that paradise is their reward for what they were doing. Is it something that the slave deserves or is it a favour from Allah *Glorified is He*? Scholars said that paradise is a favour from Allah *Glorified is He* and action is nothing but a cause and a price for entering it. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* legislated obligations for our own good and well-being and to set our daily affairs right, both at the individual level and the group level. Thus, we reap the fruits of righteous action and we enjoy it during our lives in this world. However, Allah rewards us again in the Hereafter with no profit or benefit going back to Him *Glorified is He*. Therefore, entering paradise is something extra and it is a favour from Allah.

Moreover, there is a remark here: what is action? Action is a task which is carried out by a part of the body. The hand moves; the tongue articulates; the eyes see and so forth. If you were to reflect on actions, you would find that there are two types: sayings and doings. Thus the tongue alone takes half of

all actions and the remaining limbs take the other half. Therefore, it is through the tongue that Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* could convey his Message and people will consequently accept it or reject it.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* states:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمَلُهُ وَفِصْلُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي إِنِّي اتَّقِيكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

We have commanded man to be good to his parents: his mother struggled to carry him and struggled to give birth to him – his bearing and weaning took a full thirty months.

When he has grown to manhood and reached the age of forty he [may] say, ‘Lord, help me to be truly grateful for Your favours to me and to my parents; help me to do good work that pleases You; make my offspring good. I turn to You; I am one of those who devote themselves to You’ [15]

(The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 15)

Allah *Glorified is He* says that He has commanded and obligated man to do so. ‘To command and enjoin someone’ means that you ask him to do a good action that will benefit him in this life and in the Hereafter, and that will help him carry out his task. This is why you find that most of the commandments regarding important matters are made by senior people who are approaching the end of their lives as if they are advising their family and those they are enjoining to follow.

The Arabic root letters of the verb *Wassa* (command) occur in the Noble Quran in two forms. One of them indicates that act of commanding is repeated as in the verse we are discussing, as well as the saying of Allah: ‘And the same did Ibrahim enjoin on his sons and [so did] Yaqoub’ (*al-Baqara*: 132). As for the second form, it is a transitive verb as in the verse where Allah *Glorified is He* tells us about what the ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* says: ‘And He has enjoined on me prayer and poor-rate so long as I live’ (*Maryam*: 31). Thus,

the Arabic verb for command is like the verbs *anzala* and *nazzala*. The former indicates that something came down all at once, while the latter means that it came down one after another.

The word man, who is being commanded, is absolute and general. It refers to all men, from Adam *peace be upon him* until the Last Hour is established. It is the name of the species which, amongst the chosen of the creation, is the counterpart to the jinn. We say, 'Men and jinn.' The Arabic *Ins* (man) means that we like to keep the company of one another. Unlike the jinn, we do not see them and we are not the same as them in terms of our nature, therefore there is no sociability between us and them. Allah says about Satan: 'He surely sees you; He as well as his host from whence you cannot see them' (*al-A'raf*: 27).

Therefore, this commandment is directed from Allah *Glorified is He* to all of mankind in general including the believer and the disbeliever, the legally responsible adult and the child who will be rewarded if he acts according to the commandment and who will not be punished if not.

It is possible to compare this issue to prayer as Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* said in the Noble Hadith: 'Command your children to perform prayer when they are seven years old and beat them (for not offering it) when they are ten.'⁽¹⁾ The command comes from you and the punishment also comes from you because they are still not at the age of legal responsibility. Further, prayer at this age is a matter of training and getting them used to and accustomed to it at a young age so that they continue to do it throughout their lives. Therefore, when they reach the age of legal responsibility, it will be easy for them and they will be doing it habitually.

Parents are the father and the mother who are the direct cause of one's existence. This is because there is an indirect cause which is the Sublime Creator Who brought Adam *peace be upon him* and *Hawwa'* (Eve) into existence. The first existence was out of nothing, while our existence is from procreation and from a cause, namely the parents.

For the preservation of the species and the population of the earth, Allah *Glorified is He* connected reproduction to the strongest natural inclinations and

(1) Narrated by Abu Dawud

the greatest pleasure in man. How? Scholars said that when man looks at a beautiful sight, his eyes enjoy it and when he smells a nice scent, his nose enjoys it. The same goes for when you eat something that you love. Therefore, each limb has its own specific enjoyment. However, sexual intercourse produces a pleasure and an enjoyment that comprises all the limbs that share in it. Therefore Allah *Glorified is He* has legislated that a bath be taken afterwards because all the limbs took part in the process and because one is not thinking about Allah *Glorified is He* at that moment.

Allah *Glorified is He* has also connected the two because He knows that children represent a burden for the family and it is difficult to raise and provide for them. That is why He *the Almighty* swore by this matter when He said: 'And by the begetter and whom he begot' (*al-Balad*: 3).

If Allah *Glorified is He* had not connected reproduction to this pleasure, many people would do without it. You see how much a woman suffers from the pain of pregnancy and childbirth. She even says out of regret that she will never do it again. Then she forgets her pain and her suffering and yearns to get pregnant once again. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* connected reproduction to this pleasure for a reason. Unfortunately, it is astonishing that people exaggerate it, overdo it and take it outside of its proper bounds, making sexual pleasure the foundation.

We see animals, for example, practising it merely for the sake of preserving their species. This is why when the male approaches the female, it smells it first, and if it is pregnant, it leaves it alone and it does not give it a chance. It is also amazing that we find fault in animals and say 'beastly desire' and so forth. Glory be to Allah!

Moreover, we notice that the childhood of man is approximately the longest childhood comparing to all other creatures. Animals, for example, give birth. The mother breastfeeds her child and after the period of breast-feeding, she does not recognise the child and is not concerned with it.

As for man, he is a child until he reaches adolescence. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And when the children among you have attained to puberty, let them seek permission' (*an-Nur*: 59). That is because man is bound and commanded to fulfil Allah's Commands and avoid His Prohibitions. Therefore, the nature

of man and his honour of being connected to Allah has made his period of nurturing longer in order to suit his task in life. Look, for example, at the cow and how its child comes out, moves and shakes the moisture off itself. Then it stops for a few minutes after which it gets up, stands, and runs around; all of this takes place within an hour of birth.

As for our children, they are able to sit, for example, after a number of months. Then they crawl, stand, and then walk after a year or more. Indeed, we have some people who extend the childhood of their children until they are twenty-five years old and consider them children in the sense that they are dependent and their parents spend on them and do not give them any responsibility.

We find commandments with regards to the parents being connected to the worship of Allah *Glorified is He* in four places in the Noble Quran. First, Allah says: ‘And serve Allah and do not associate anything with Him and be good to the parents’ (*an-Nisa*: 36). Second, He says: ‘And when We made a covenant with the children of Israel: You shall not serve any but Allah and [you shall do] good to [your] parents’ (*al-Baqara*: 83). The third place is in the chapter of *al-An’am* where Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Say: Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you—[remember] that you do not associate anything with Him and show kindness to your parents,’ (*al-An’am*: 151) and the forth is in the chapter of *al-Isra*: ‘And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve [any] but Him, and goodness to your parents’ (*al-Isra*: 23).

These are the four places in which Allah *Glorified is He* commands children to be good to their parents. He connects this, due to its importance, to the His Worship, as if they are of equal weight on the scale. This is because parents, as we have mentioned, are the direct cause of one’s existence, thus showing them filial gratitude and goodness paves the way and trains you to be reminded of the Sublime Cause of your existence, that is, Allah, the Creator.

Allah *Glorified is He* obligates us with this commandment even if the parents are disbelievers, which, as we have said, is a general enjoinder. He *Glorified is He* says: ‘And We have enjoined on man goodness to his parents, and if they contend with you that you should associate [others] with Me, of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them, to Me is your return, so I will inform you of what you did’ (*al-Ankabut*: 8). He *the Almighty* also says:

‘...Do not obey them, and keep company with them in this world kindly’ (*Luqman*: 15). If Allah *Glorified is He* is enjoining us with regards to our parents because they are the direct cause of one’s existence even if they are not believers, then what do you think of the Sublime Cause of your existence?

Some of the orientalist have objected to this point and said: ‘The Quran says: ‘...Do not obey them, and keep company with them in this world kindly,’ (*Luqman*: 15) and in another verse He says: ‘You shall not find a people who believe in Allah and the latter day befriending those who act in opposition to Allah and His Messenger, even though they were their [own] fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their kinsfolk’ (*al-Mujadala*: 22). They thereby consider it a contradiction between the two verses. This is because they do not understand the Arabic language and are not familiar with its styles and secrets, as there is a difference between love and kindness. Love comes from an emotion in the heart, while kindness is a favour that you do for someone you love and also someone you despise. When Allah *Glorified is He* commands us to show filial piety, He is only training us and preparing us to show piety towards the One Who created them and us. He is the Sublime Establisher of everything into existence.

Speaking legally, ‘to be good to someone’ means to do goodness and kindness beyond what you have been obligated to and within the same category as the obligation. Allah *Glorified is He* explained this meaning in the chapter of *adh-Dhariyyat*. He says: ‘Surely those who guard [against evil] shall be in gardens and fountains. Taking what their Lord gives them; surely they were before that, the doers of good’ (*adh-Dhariyyat*: 15-16). Then He *the Almighty* describes them and gives aspects of their goodness, saying: ‘They used to sleep but little in the night. And in the morning they asked forgiveness. And in their property was a portion due to him who begs and to him who is denied [good]’ (*adh-Dhariyyat*: 17-19).

These three issues are not mandatory upon a Muslim. Rather, they are beyond what Allah *Glorified is He* has commanded. Have you not seen what He *the Almighty* says regarding wealth: ‘In their property was a portion due to him who begs and to him who is denied [good]’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 19). However, when talking about the obligatory alms, He says: ‘And those in whose wealth there is a fixed portion’ (*al-Ma’arij*: 24).

Here, we should distinguish between the fixed portion, which is the obligatory *zakat* and the recommended one, which is the recommended charity. As for the *zakat*, a fixed portion of the money should be given out; as for the recommended charity, one is recommended to give out what he wants. Here, we should stress that whoever gives out the recommended charity, he reaches the level of *Ihsan*, which is the highest rank of worship.

Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* commands us to show filial piety and do good to our parents as they have a favour over us in the sense that they brought us into existence, raised us and provided for us. Thus, we must give them more than what they deserve and when you give more than what you are obligated to give, you are doing good unto them.

Therefore, the command of filial piety does not stop at the necessary obligation, but rather, it transcends to the rank of *Ihsan*. That is why when Allah *Glorified is He* talks about the right of parents, He says: ‘Say not to them [so much as] “Ugh” nor chide them’ (*al-Isra*: 23). ‘Ugh’ is a sound that expresses displeasure and indicates constriction. So, beware of saying this word to them, or complaining about them, especially when they are old and in an abject state and in the greatest need of compassion and care.

This is because, at this age, man returns to his childhood once again and he needs someone who carries him, helps him sit and feeds him and thereby he might do things that will cause offense, so beware of being offended by them in this state. Maybe his feet trembles and fall on the ground or breaks a vase, for example. Thus, beware of showing him what offends you and know that you are being rewarded for this. It is being stored away for you and it is a debt that will be discharged. Whoever shows piety to his parents will be shown piety by his own children. Anachronistically, you are showing him piety and bearing his burden while wishing death for him. However, he has done more than that for you and wished you a long life.

In light of this relationship between parents and children, we can understand the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘O young men, whoever amongst you can afford marriage costs, let him get married, for indeed it lowers the gaze and preserves one from immorality.’⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

Getting married at an early age is better because it protects the person who does it and also, as the Bedouin said, is the best way to have a parent who will take care of you in the childhood of your old age such that the child, in this situation, assumes the position of the parent who takes care of his child.

In another place, Allah *Glorified is He* uses a different word for goodness. He says: 'And We have enjoined on man goodness to his parents' (*al-'Ankabut*: 8). The difference between *husn* and *Ihsan* is that the latter is the action of doing something good to them. As for the former, it is the gerund of this verb and the noun of this process that you are involved in, like saying that 'so-and-so a person is just' yet 'so-and-so a person is the justice itself' meaning that he has reached the furthest extent in implementing justice such that he and justice are the same thing. Therefore, *husn* is more informative than *Ihsan*. Responding to a greeting with what is better is an Islamic principle. Therefore Allah says: 'And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a better [greeting] than it or return it' (*an-Nisa'*: 86).

We notice that Allah *Glorified is He* did not mention any reason for doing goodness to the parents in the verse: 'Now (among the best of righteous deeds which) We have enjoined upon man (is) goodness (*husn*) towards his parents' (*al-'Ankabut*: 8). Rather, He says afterwards: 'And if they contend with you that you should associate [others] with Me, of which you have no knowledge' (*al-'Ankabut*: 8). Allah *Glorified is He* maintains this right of theirs even in a situation of their disbelief and He affirmed and enjoined that they must be shown the best of filial piety

Allah, then, follows with the words: 'It is unto Me that you all must return, whereupon I shall make you (truly) understand (the right and wrong of) all that you were doing (in life)' (*al-'Ankabut*: 8). While in another verse He says: '...Do not obey them, and keep company with them in this world kindly' (*Luqman*: 15). Scholars explained it saying that this is because parents are of two categories. One needs his child in order to live and a parent who does not need his child and is self-sufficient. If the parent is in need, then you keep company with him in kindness, i.e. assist him and make him live an honourable life. If he is self-sufficient, then that is his affair and everyone will be returned to Allah *Glorified is He*.

Here, in the verse that we are discussing, Allah *Glorified is He* did not say *husn* or *Ihsan*, but rather, He mentioned the reason behind the commandment saying: ‘His mother struggled to carry him and struggled to give birth to him and the bearing of him and the weaning of him was thirty months’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 15).

In the verse we are discussing, He *Glorified is He* determines the period of pregnancy along with the period of breastfeeding as one length of time. Yet in another verse He says about breastfeeding itself: ‘And his weaning takes two years’ (*Luqman*: 14). Therefore, each verse has taken a glean and by bringing the two verses together, we can solve some of the problems regarding the issue of the period of pregnancy and the period of breastfeeding.

It is related that ‘Ali *may Allah be pleased with him* came to see ‘Umar *may Allah be pleased with him*. ‘Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* wanted to carry out the prescribed legal penalty for adultery on a woman because she had given birth after six months, whilst in her husband’s house; it was well-known that the normal period for pregnancy is nine months. ‘Ali *may Allah be pleased with him* told him to wait and he read the verses to him: ‘... And her bearing him and his utter dependence on her took thirty months’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 15). He then read the other verse: ‘...And his utter dependence on her lasted two years’ (*Luqman*: 14). ‘Ali *may Allah be pleased with him* observed that by subtracting two years from thirty months, it is possible for the period of pregnancy to be six months which is the shortest term possible for a pregnancy.

That is why ‘Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* said, ‘Wretched is the place on earth where Abu Al-Hasan is not there.’⁽¹⁾ Indeed, ‘Ali *may Allah be pleased with him* was renowned for his knowledge and legal verdicts because he had become Muslim since childhood, that is, he drank from the spring of Prophecy from a very early age. His education was an Islamic one from the very beginning. However, other people had some education that was given in the Age of Ignorance.

An example for the correct understanding and legal knowledge of ‘Ali *may Allah be pleased with him* is that when Prophet Muhammad *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* passed away, the Emigrants and Helpers met in As-Saqifa

(1) Narrated by *Al-Hakim* and *Al-Bayhaqi*

to discuss the matter of the Caliphate. Each side wanted one of their own to have the Caliphate and the Helpers were pushing for this. Then they said: 'A leader from us and a leader from you.' When this reached 'Ali *may Allah be pleased with him*, he said: 'Your arguments are not strong. Ask them, i.e. the Helpers whether they have heard the statement of Prophet Muhammad: "When you are in control, bequeath goodness to the Helpers."' Therefore, if leadership was to be with them, then bequests would not take its place.

One of the curious stories that occurred between 'Ali and 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with them* is that 'Ali came to see 'Umar and found him angry. Whereupon he *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'What has angered you, O Commander of the Believers?' 'Umar said, 'I asked Hudhayfa, 'How he is?' and he said, "I woke up loving trial and temptation, hate the truth, pray without ablution and I have on earth what Allah does not have in the heavens.'"

'Ali *may Allah be pleased with him* then laughed and said that Hudhayfa has spoken the truth. 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* replied, 'Do you say the same thing, O Abu Al-Hasan?' 'Yes,' 'Ali said and explained what Hudhayfa meant. He said that he woke up loving his properties and his child. 'Ali *may Allah be pleased with him* then read the verse: 'Your possessions and your children are only a trial' (*at-Taghabun*: 15). He went on saying that he hates the truth, which is death and who from amongst us loves it?! Further, he prays without ablution meaning that he sends prayers upon Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*. In addition, he has on earth what Allah does not have in the heavens meaning that he has a wife and a child. It is astonishing that we hear in our time those who diminish the rank of those people and want to abolish the personages of Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Ali *may Allah be pleased with them* from our history.

We also notice in the verse we are discussing that Allah *Glorified is He* says that a mother bears her son with trouble and she brings him forth with trouble. With trouble in this instance means reluctantly or with difficulty. Further, Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: 'His mother bears him with fainting upon fainting,' (*Luqman*: 14).

Fainting is the weakness that results from pregnancy and childbirth. As for the troubles of this matter, they are due to the fact that women have

different natures. Amongst them are those who love this process and amongst them are those who hate it, but they reluctantly obey their husbands and bear the burdens of pregnancy, craving certain foods and the pain of childbirth afterwards. After the birth, they are fully preoccupied with the newborn child and they feel compassion for it. At the same time, the father is preoccupied with work and obtaining provision. This is why the man is more rational and the woman is more emotional, as each is according to their task in life.

Therefore some people make a mistake in understanding the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* about women wherein he says: 'I advise you to take care of the woman for they are created from a rib and the most crooked portion of the rib is its upper part. If you try to straighten it, it will break and if you leave it, it will remain crooked.'⁽¹⁾

When we reflect on this Hadith, we find that the crookedness of the rib is for a reason because the ribs were created to protect the most precious and most important two organs in the body, i.e. the heart and the lungs. If the ribs were straight, then they would not be able to perform this task. Do we say, for example, that a hook is crooked, or that its crookedness is a defect? No, we never say that because the nature of its function and task necessitates that it be in this shape. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* compared the woman to the rib because their task is affection and compassion.

It is worth noting that when Allah *Glorified is He* commanded us with regards to our parents, He mentioned the considerations that concern the mother and did not mention any of the considerations that concern the father. Scholars said that it is because the role of the mother comes at a time when the child does not comprehend her role and her precedence in the phases of pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding. As for the role of the father in providing and caring, it comes at a time when the child can comprehend the favours of his father. That is why we need to remind the child of the role of his mother and her precedence because he is not aware of it. As for the role of the father, he knows it well.

If we are concerned with the role of parents in terms of raising and educating, we must remember the verse wherein Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And say: O

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

my Lord! Have compassion on them, as they brought me up [when I was] little' (*al-Isra'*: 24). This verse gives us the general method of raising all children.

The parents deserve such a commandment for two reasons. They are the direct cause of one's existence and thereby remind you of the Sublime Cause of your existence; and secondly, they raise you and thereby remind you of the Sublime Nurturer. Thus, Allah is a Lord and a Nurturer. He has created us from nothing and He provides for us from nothing. He is the One Who has nurtured and provided us with the means of nurturing. Therefore, the enjoinder to do good to parents trains us to improve our relationship with Allah, our Creator, and our Nurturer.

In addition, we understand from this verse that nurturing alone is a reason and consideration behind doing good. A child could be raised up and nurtured by other than his parents, and thus those who raised him would have precedence over him and would deserve to be shown gratitude because they have carried out half of the process. The father and mother thus have the virtue of bringing them into existence and the nurturer has the virtue of raising and thereby deserves half the reward.

This matter, therefore, encourages us to take care of orphans and nurture them for the sake of Allah's Countenance. If someone's father dies, then the entire community is his father. That is why Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'I will be like this in paradise with the person who takes care of an orphan.' He then raised his forefinger and middle finger by way of illustration.⁽¹⁾

This is because if the father were to die and leave children who do not find anyone in the community to take care of them and be a father for them, they would grow up having resentment towards other children and towards the entire community. Maybe it will even lead to them rebelling against Allah *Glorified is He* Who decreed that they would be orphans.

Allah *Glorified is He* indicates the proper time of bringing up a child when He says: '...As they brought me up [when I was] little' (*al-Isra'*: 24). That raising and nurturing have a time which is the time of childhood. I remember

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari

when I was invited to give a lecture entitled 'Raising the Youth' in one of our universities. However, before beginning the lecture, I sought the permission of the director of the university to change the title of the lecture because the youth are not to be raised. Youth is an energy that is utilised in your daily life. The youth have already been raised. If we were to say 'Raising the Youth,' the title would not be correct. It is raising or upbringing children because childhood is like dough that could be formed without objecting. As for the youth, they are fully formed. This is why they object and they react unhappily when you give them criticism or an instruction.

However, the youth who were in attendance at the university said that they were not raised in the correct way, so they wanted to recommence their raising. I said to them: 'Therefore, recommence your childhood with us and accept instruction and criticism without objecting to it. Be like the patient before the doctor accepting whatever he says without discussion.'

One of our mistakes in raising children is that we prolong their childhood and thus the family continues to bring up the child and provide for him until he is twenty or twenty-five years old. This is why the west has surpassed us in this matter because when one of their children reaches puberty, he becomes independent from his family and provides for himself, even if his father were a millionaire. This increases the numbers of workers, decreases idleness, and increases production. These are all means of advancement that we do not have and up till now we have not been able to utilise the capabilities of the youth.

Indeed, if you were to go to one of the capital cities of the west, you would not see the youth there filling the streets and corners. You would not find the cafes filled with people without jobs. You will only see them at their break time going out like locusts to have their lunch. Nevertheless, the mistake that they have made is that they have made this apply to both boys and girls.

The words of Allah *Glorified is He* '...As they brought me up [when I was] little,' (*al-Isra*': 24) show that both parents were involved, the father and the mother; and that each of them has a role in raising and nurturing. The father earns, while the woman runs and takes cares of the home. Thus, they are partners in this matter and the presence of the woman in the house, generally speaking, means that she has greater influence than the man in the process of

raising and nurturing. This is why we give boys what suits them and we give girls what suits them as we are concerned with raising and nurturing according to gender.

For this reason, it befits us now to mention the advice that the Arab mother gave her daughter as she was preparing her to move in with her husband. She said to her: 'My dear daughter, if advice is left due to etiquettes of people, I would leave it to your perfect etiquettes, but it is a wake-up call for the heedless and a help for the intelligent. My dear daughter, indeed tomorrow you will leave the house in which you grew up and the nest in which you crawled and learned to walk for a house that you are not familiar with and a companion whom you do not know, to be a slave girl to your husband and he will be a slave to you. My dear daughter, if the woman could dispense of the man due to the wealth of her parents and her lack of need of anyone besides them, then you would be the most independent of people with regards to him, but women were created for men and men were created for them. My dear daughter, take and maintain from me ten qualities that will be stored up for you. The first and the second are that you keep company with him in contentment and that you listen to him properly and obey. The third and fourth is that you check the places that are subject to his eye and nose so that his eye never sees anything ugly from you and he never smells anything from you except the most beautiful fragrance.

'The fifth and sixth are that you check the time for sleeping and eating, for indeed frequent hunger is inflammatory and disturbing sleep is annoying. The seventh and eighth are that you guard his wealth and take care of his decency and his dependents.

'The foundation of the matter with regards to wealth is good assessment and with dependents it is good planning. As for the ninth and tenth, do not disobey him in anything and do not divulge his secrets, for indeed if you undermine his command you arouse his anger and if you divulge his secrets you will not be safe from his treachery. Beware of being happy in front of him if he is worried or being depressed in front of him, while he is happy.'

This is the advice of Umama bint Al-Harith *may Allah be pleased with her* to her daughter Umm Unas bint 'Awf ibn Muhallim Ash-Shaybani. This

enjoinment was before Islam, but despite that it contains etiquettes and pieces of advices that would solve most of the family problems that are filling our courtrooms today if they were heeded by the wives in our current age. If every mother were to raise her daughter according to these etiquettes, our affairs would be put right. Unfortunately the fact is that we have abandoned these pieces of advice and become heedless of implementing them in our homes. Rather, we have left the homes to the maids and we have left raising and nurturing to those who are not qualified such that we find ourselves in the situation in which we are.

Moreover, Allah, *Glorified is He*, says: ‘Until when he attains his maturity and reaches forty years, he says: My Lord! Grant me that I may give thanks for Thy favor which Thou hast bestowed on me and on my parents’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 15). This is another phase of life that is the phase of puberty. That is when one has reached the utmost in terms of the completion of his body, strength and intellect.

An example of this is the saying of Allah regarding Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*: ‘And when he had attained his maturity, We gave him wisdom and knowledge: and thus do We reward those who do good’ (*Yusuf*: 22). Allah *Glorified is He* also says about Musa (Moses): ‘And when he attained his maturity and became full grown, We granted him wisdom and knowledge; and thus do We reward those who do good [to others]’ (*al-Qasas*: 14).

Therefore, reaching full manhood and maturity and the completion of one’s body, strength and intellect is the beginning of receiving wisdom and it is the beginning of being legally responsible. If one was made legally responsible before puberty and then puberty and adolescence took place along with the changes that happen in the body as result, the slave would might say, ‘Changes have happened to me that I was not thinking about when I came to believe in You.’ This is why the entire process has been delayed until the age of puberty which is the peak of maturity.

The peak of maturity in man is when he is able to reproduce someone like him. The same goes for fruits, for example. We said before that the melon is not nice to eat until its core has become even and black such that if we were to cultivate it, it would give us a new plant. When you eat this you are guaranteed that there will be others. But if you break it open and its core is

not even, eat it and then cultivate the core and it will not grow. Thus, this is wisdom for maintaining the species. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Behold, the fruit of it when it yields the fruit and the ripening of it' (*al-An'am*: 99). The existence of the word ripening means that you make sure that there will be another tree just as you notice in fruit-bearing trees that if you do not pick the fruits they fall on their own.

It is from the wisdom of The Creator and the wonders of the creation that you, in the phase of growth and before the age of puberty, find the process of growth is completed with an accurate estimation and inimitability. For example, there are things in the body that grow but also things in the body that resemble them that do not grow. Take the example of hair. It grows and we cut it from time to time. As for the hair of the eyebrows, for example, or the eyelashes, it does not grow. The same goes for the bones. They grow as the child grows until it reaches full maturity. At the same time, the teeth are also bones and they stop once they are in a particular shape and then no longer grow. If they continued to grow like all the other bones they would become like the tusks of an elephant.

Therefore, the matter is not mechanical, as we have said, but rather it is engineered by the One Who originated this universe.

Allah *Glorified is He* says afterwards: 'And reaches forty years, he (that is righteous) prays: 'O my Lord! Inspire me so that I may forever be grateful for those blessings of You with which you have graced me and my parents,' (*al-Ahqaf*: 15). Allah *Glorified is He* specifies the age of forty because it is the age at which man should stop, take himself to account and correct his path.

The age of forty is the peak of the intellectual maturity, and it is also the beginning of the descent towards the death. This is why the True Lord *the Almighty* turns our attention towards the age of forty so that we can stop and put in order whatever we need to. Allah's saying: '...help me...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 15) means: make me concerned and give me the strength. Allah *the Almighty* the says: '...to be truly grateful for Your favours to me...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 15). These favours and blessings include being brought into existence, our health, and well-being, Islam, enabling success and obedience and making the parents nurture and raise us. Then the gratitude is extended to the parents,

Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and to my parents...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 15) because the blessing for the parent is a blessing for its child. Then He *the Almighty* says: ‘...help me to do good work that pleases you...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 15) which means ‘enable me success and inspire me to do righteous action.’

Righteous action is to stand firm in implementing the commands and avoiding the prohibitions that have been related to us via the text. Regarding that for which there is no text, you are free to do it or not to do it. Allah’s saying: ‘...that pleases you...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 15) means that this action is in accordance with Allah’s Way of Guidance, or it means that you accept it and you reward me for it. Then Allah’s saying: ‘...make my offspring good...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 15) is a supplication to have righteousness extended to one’s offspring, or it could mean that I, O Lord, squandered myself and fell short, and I do not want that for my offspring. I want them to have the righteousness that I did not attain to. This is a known principle; that the father loves to amend what he missed out on in his life and make sure that it is realised in the lives of his children and his progeny after them. He wants them to realise the perfection that he never attained. This is why he is happy even if his child surpasses him. Reflect on the verb in Allah’s saying: ‘...make good (*aslih*)...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 15), and you will find that it is transitive in and of itself, so why is *fi* (in) mentioned when Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and make good in (*fi*) my offspring...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 15)? Why did He not say: ‘Grant me righteous offspring’? What is the necessity behind this? The style here is as if He is making the offspring a container for receiving righteousness and man’s container is his heart. This is why it is mentioned in the Hadith: ‘Indeed in the body there is a lump of flesh; if it is sound then the whole body is sound and if it is corrupt then the whole body is corrupt. Indeed it is the heart.’⁽¹⁾ Therefore, *fi* was used to make the offspring a container and an envelope.

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no (50)* and *Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no (2996)* from the *Hadith of Nu‘man ibn Bashir* that he heard Prophet Muhammad Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him saying: ‘Indeed the permissible is clear and the impermissible is clear, but in between them there are doubtful matters and most people have no knowledge of them. Thus, whoever saves himself from doubtful matters saves his religion and his honor. And whoever indulges in doubtful matters is like a shepherd who grazes his animals near the private pasture of someone else and at any moment he is liable to slip into it...’

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘...I turn to You; I am one of those who devote themselves to You,’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 15). The door of repentance is open until the end of one’s life, but we should not delay it and be heedless of it. However, some of us are taken over by the life of this world and it makes them forget themselves, so they delay repenting and reconciling themselves with their Lord until this age. This is why a tradition has been mentioned: ‘If a slave has not repented after forty years, Allah runs His hand over his face and says: ‘Is it not time for this face to be ashamed?’ There is another Hadith: ‘If someone reaches the age of forty and his goodness does not outweigh his evil, then let him prepare himself – and we seek refuge in Allah – for Hell.’⁽¹⁾ Why? It is because you had fun in your youth and you satiated your desires with whatever you wanted. However, when you’re forty and above, you should be ashamed of disobeying Allah *the Almighty* and be ashamed of delaying your repentance when you cannot guarantee how long you’ll live. Allah’s saying: ‘...I am one of those who devote themselves to You,’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 15), means that defectiveness and inadequacy are not in the creed. Rather, they are in implementing the rulings that are required by the creed.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ نَنْقَبِلُ عَنْهُمْ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَنَتَجَاوَزُ عَنْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ
فِي أَصْحَابِ الْجَنَّةِ وَعَدَ الصَّادِقُ الَّذِي كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

**We accept from such people the best of what they do
and We overlook their bad deeds. They will be among
the people of Paradise – the true promise that has been
given to them [16] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 16)**

Allah’s saying: ‘...these are...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 16), refers to those who have just been mentioned along with their attributes. Allah *the Almighty* then says:

(1) Narrated by Abu Al-Fath Al-Azdi from Jubayr from Ad-Dahhak and then from Ibn ‘Abbas who attributed it to Prophet Muhammad Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him: ‘If someone reaches the age of forty and their goodness does not outweigh their evil, then let them prepare for the Fire.’ See Al-Alusi in his commentary of (*al-Ahqaf*: 15); see also As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*. Imam Ibn Al-Jawzi said in [*Al-Mawdu‘at*]: ‘This is not an authentic Hadith from Allah’s Messenger’, and Al-‘Ajluni mentioned it in *Kashf Al-Khafa*’ (2344).

‘...they from whom We accept the best of what they have done...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 16). It is well-known that the verb *taqabbala* (accept) is transitive along with the particle *min* (from), as in the statement of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: ‘And when Ibrahim and Ismail raised the foundations of the House: Our Lord! Accept from us...’ (*al-Baqara*: 127). In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And He it is Who accepts repentance of His servants...’ (*ash-Shura*: 25). Therefore, it is sometimes transitive with the word *min* (from) and sometimes transitive with the word ‘*an* (of), and each of them has a distinctive meaning. Thus, Allah’s saying: ‘These are they from whom We accept the best of what they have done...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 16) means that repentance relieves you of the burden and weight of disobedience because it removes it from you. Therefore He *the Almighty* says: ‘...of (‘*an*) what they have done...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 16) because using one word in the place of another word should be done for reason and it adds a meaning that is not given by the other word. We clarified this issue before regarding the True Lord’s saying: ‘Praise be to Allah, Who has given me in old age Ismail...’ (*Ibrahim*: 39). All scholars believe that ‘*ala* here means: with his old age. By reflecting on the verse, we find that *ma*’ is comprised of two letters while ‘*ala* is comprised of three. Why did the Noble Quran use ‘*ala* here instead of *ma*’? Why did it leave off the ease of two letters in favour of three? When we reflect on the matter of Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) old age *peace be upon him* we find that the company that is indicated by *ma*’ is insufficient, as the meaning is a word that should indicate company that is overcome. This is because old age was present with Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and accompanying him, but his old age was overcome by Allah’s Power. It is as if His Absolute Power overcame the law of old age and violated the rule. Thus Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* came in spite of this old age, and this meaning cannot be conveyed with *ma*’ but rather with ‘*ala*. Likewise, in Allah’s saying: ‘...and most surely your Lord is the Lord of forgiveness to people, notwithstanding their injustice; and most surely your Lord is severe in requiting (evil)’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 6). Thus, it is as if the sin necessitates punishment but Allah’s Forgiveness overcomes and takes predominance over this punishment. Therefore, when He uses one word in the place of another, it must add a meaning that is given by the first word. Therefore, Allah’s saying: ‘...We accept the best of what they have done...’

(*al-Ahqaf*: 16) means that We relieved them of the burden that was there before repentance. In another verse the True Lord *the Almighty* explains this meaning: '...so these are they of whom Allah changes the evil deeds to good ones...' (*al-Furqan*: 70). Someone even said: 'By Allah, I have no regrets that I have committed any major sins because Allah will transform them into good deeds.' This is wrong, because who can tell you how long you will live so that you can repent. Allah's saying: '...and pass over their evil deeds...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 16) means that We will pardon them and be forbearing. Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...among the dwellers of the garden...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 16). I stated before that being 'the *ashab* of paradise' means that there will be companionship or friendship between them, or that it means that they will be the owners of it. However, here He *Glorified is He* says: '...among (*fi*) the dwellers of the garden...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 16). It is as if these people that we are talking about are in the middle of paradise, or the people of paradise are surrounding them. They are in the centre. This understanding comes from the meaning of *fi* here. However, why is it that these people deserve to be in the middle and in the centre and the people of paradise are around them? Scholars said: 'It is because those who had been accustomed to disobedience and then moved over to obedience went through great difficulty after they had been delighted and pleased with disobedience. Thus, they struggle with themselves to stay upon obedience, as opposed to those who have not experienced disobedience. Obedience for these people is natural and they do not need to struggle like the former. This is why Allah *the Almighty* treats them with this lenience and this favour such that He transforms their evil deeds into good ones and this is the utmost of generosity. Then the True Lord *the Almighty* reassures them: '...the promise of truth which they were promised,' (*al-Ahqaf*: 16). It is as if they do not believe that Allah *the Almighty* will treat them with this favour, so He reminds them that this is Allah's Promise which is a True Promise that is never broken. There is no one who can revoke or nullify this Promise.

The True Lord *the Almighty* gives His slaves all of these facilitations and incentives, as He accepts the repentance of those who repent and He forgives those who commit bad deeds and He transforms their bad deeds into good ones. This is not for the salvation of only the repentant, but rather, the salvation of the entire society. If repentance had not been legislated, society

would have become miserable with every disobedient person having a door slammed in his face and evil and corruption would have become widespread.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَالَّذِي قَالَ لَوْلَدِيهِ أَفٍّ لَّكُمْ أَتَعِدَانِي أَنْ أُخْرَجَ وَقَدْ خَلَتِ الْقُرُونُ مِنْ قَبْلِي وَهُمَا
يَسْتَعْثِفَانِ اللَّهَ وَبِكَ ءَامِنِينَ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَيَقُولُ مَا هَذَا إِلَّا أَسْطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

But some say to their parents, ‘What? Are you really warning me that I shall be raised alive from my grave, when so many generations have already passed and gone before me?’ His parents implore God for help; they say, ‘Alas for you! Believe! God’s promise is true,’ but still he replies, ‘These are nothing but ancient fables’ [17]
(The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 17)

The Noble Quran gives us a number of gleanings of parents with children, yet they differ according to the circumstances. Because of the importance of this relationship between the parent and the child, Allah *the Almighty* connected the enjoinder concerning parents to His worship, to the extent that He gave it the same importance and sanctity. He *the Almighty* says: ‘And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve (any) but Him, and goodness to your parents...’ (*al-Isra*: 23). This is because the parent and the child are the essential nucleus for building a community. So if it is sound, the community is sound, and if it is corrupt then the community is corrupt. The soundness of this cell requires that we should know the rank of the parents and that they are the direct cause of one’s existence, and thus they have the right of causality in bringing one into existence, meaning if it was not for them then the child would not exist.

When we show them filial piety and respect them, this trains us to exalt and respect the First Creator and the Original Founder of everything. This is why this enjoinder is general. There is no difference between a believer and a disbeliever, as the True Lord enjoins us to respect our parents, even if they are disbelievers because He is the Lord of everyone and He takes it upon Himself to give life, sustenance and subsistence to everyone because they are His slaves and His making. I said that we must notice the difference between

Divinity and Lordship. Lordship has to do with giving and nurturing while Divinity has to do with commandments and worship by obeying commands and avoiding prohibitions. It is also a gift, but a gift of legal responsibility with regards to doing and not doing. It is a gift because the benefit goes back to the slave and Allah does not benefit from it in the slightest. The obedience of the obedient does not give Him *the Almighty* an attribute that He did not have, nor does the disobedience of the disobedient strip Him of an attribute that is firmly established for Him. This is because Allah has the Attributes of Absolute Perfection and this was the case before He even created this creation. This is why when man is in a serious problem that he is unable to do anything about, we see him saying: 'O Lord!' He calls for the Attribute of Lordship. The meaning of 'O Lord' is 'O You Who has taken care of me and raised me. Take me by the hand and help me.' However, when he wants to seek help in a matter of legal responsibility, he says: 'O Allah!' meaning 'My God, O You Who has commanded me and helped me to obey You in what you have commanded me.' Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* gets nothing from man's acts of worship. Rather, the reward is acquired by the one who is legally responsible. The True Lord *the Almighty* wants a believing, righteous community firmly built and established and in the best of states, just as you encourage your little child to revise by saying to him: 'If you pass, I will buy you a bicycle or a suit.' This is because you want goodness for him. You will not benefit from what you buy for him. This is why it is mentioned in the Qudsi Hadith 'O My slaves! Indeed, you will never bring any benefit that would benefit Me and you will never bring any harm that would harm Me. O My slaves! If the first of you and the last of you, those of you who are alive and those of you who are dead, those of you who are human and those of you who are jinn, and those of you who are present and those of you who are absent were all like the most Allah-conscious man among you, that would not increase Me in My Dominion in the slightest. And, if the first of you and the last of you were like the most sinful man among you, that would not decrease my Dominion in the slightest.

O My slave, if the first of you and the last of you...were to gather altogether on an open plain and each one of you were to ask what he wanted, I would grant it to each one of you and that would not decrease what I have

except as much as what a needle extracts when it is dipped in the ocean. This is because I am magnanimous, glorious; My giving is speech and My punishment is speech. When I want something My only command is to say: 'Be!' and it is.'⁽¹⁾ Therefore, legal responsibility is entirely for the benefit of the legally responsible people. I clarified this matter when we explained the meaning of Allah's saying: 'These are on a right course from their Lord...' (*al-Baqara*: 5). It is as if guidance is a beast and a mount that carries the guided people and takes them to the destination that they are heading for. It is thus clear that guidance is not a burden and a weight upon the one who has it, but rather, it helps him. The verse that we are discussing: '...But some say to their parents, 'What?' (*al-Ahqaf*: 17) gives us a gleaming of when the parents are believers and the child is a disbeliever. It also illustrates the eagerness of the parents for the child's salvation, as we have seen in the story of Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* and his son. This verse was revealed regarding 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr⁽²⁾ *may Allah be pleased with him*. His parents had accepted Islam, but he himself had refused. They would call on him to have faith in Allah and faith in the Resurrection, but he would say to them: 'Where is so-and-so? Where is so-and-so?' and he used to refer to people who had lived and died in the past.'⁽³⁾ Then 'Abd Ar-Rahman *may Allah be pleased with him* became a good Muslim. It is yet said that 'A'isha *may Allah be pleased with her*

(1) See *At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, no. (2419)*; see also *Ibn Majah, Sunnan, no. (4247)* and *Ahmad, Musnad, no. (20405, 20560)* from the Hadith of Abu Dharr. *At-Tirmidhi* said: 'This Hadith is good (*hasan*).'

(2) His nickname was Abu 'Abdullah or Abu Mohamed. He is the full brother of 'Aisha, the wife of Prophet Muhammad, and his mother is Umm Ruman bint Al-Harith. He witnessed Badr and Uhud with his people, while he was still a disbeliever. He accompanied Prophet Muhammad in the treaty of Al-Hudaybiya. The scholars of the Prophetic Biography say: 'His name was 'Abd Al-Ka'ba, so the Messenger of Allah changed it and called him 'Abd Ar-Rahman.' [*Al-Isti'ab fi Ma'rifat Al-Ashab* 1/248].

(3) Regarding the opinion that states that this verse was revealed down concerning 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, this is the opinion of Ibn 'Abbas, As-Suddi, Abu Al-'Aliya and Mujahid. It is also said that it was 'Abdallah ibn Abu Bakr instead. In his *Tafsir* (9/6246), *Al-Qurtubi* mentioned this in his *Tafsir*. *Ibn Kathir* said: 'If someone claims that it was sent down with regard to 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr then their opinion is weak because 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr became a good Muslim and he was from the best of people in his time.'

disagreed with this and said that it was sent down in reference to someone whom she mentioned by name. Allah's saying: 'But some say to their parents...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 17) means 'remember the one who said to his parents: '...Fie upon both of you...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 17). The word *uff* (Ugh) is a noun verb in the imperfect tense and is used to express displeasure. When someone says *yata'ffafu*, it means that he said '*uff*' and he is showing irritation or displeasure with regards to something dirty or filthy or an action that he is not happy with. Allah's saying: '...upon both of you...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 17) indicates his anger towards both because they are urging him. He *Glorified is He* then says: '...Fie upon both of you...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 17). This is not being far from them. But why did he, i.e. the son say '*uff*'? Some scholars said: 'It is because the parents were urging him to believe, yet he did not want faith. After they had urged him a great deal, he said *uff* and then said what Allah *the Almighty* recorded in the Noble Quran: '...Are you really warning me that I shall be raised alive from my grave...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 17)?' This question means, 'Will I be resurrected after death?' The *hamza* is used to ask a question here and it indicates astonishment or denial, as he is denying the resurrection. Then he brings the proof that supports his point of view: '...when so many generations have already passed and gone before me' (*al-Ahqaf*: 17) meaning that generations have passed and many have died yet I have not seen any of them come out of their graves. However, he who thinks that Resurrection will be in the worldly life is wrong because Resurrection will take place in the time fixed by Allah *the Almighty*. However, after the parents had heard this speech and noticed this determination to remain upon disbelief, they found nothing other than Allah, so they turned to Him *Glorified is He*. Allah *the Almighty* says: '...His parents implore Allah for help; they say, 'Alas for you! Believe!' (*al-Ahqaf*: 17) This illustrates the nature of the parents and their strong desire for their son to be saved, as they implore and urge their son to believe and taste the sweetness of faith that they have tasted. Allah's saying, '...Alas for you! Believe!' (*al-Ahqaf*: 17) is, again, compelling him to believe, or alas for you if you do not believe. We notice here that the verb *yastaghith* (implore Allah for help) is made transitive with the word *ba'*, and thus one says: 'so-and-so *yastaghith* (seeks help) in (*bi*) Allah', so why is the *ba'* removed here and the verb is transitive on its own. Allah *the Almighty* says: '...they implore Allah for help

(*yasthaghithani Allah*)...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 17). Some scholars said: 'This shows that they are facing a difficult matter, a hard heart that is blockaded and stubborn. It does not accept any invitation and it does not respond to the call of the parents, nor does it appreciate their feelings.' This is why they turned to Allah *the Almighty* directly to guide their son; to open his heart and soften this hard character so that he can listen, obey and be saved. It is for this reason that I previously said that you will not find anyone who loves goodness for you the way your parents love it for you, to the extent that they love for you to be in a better state than them. This is only found with parents and children. Therefore, in the face of this stubbornness the parents have no choice but to turn to Allah, the One Who turns over hearts and is the Original Founder of all causes. When the means of the creation are restricted, leave it to the Creator, as the hearts are between two of His Fingers and He turns them over as He wills. I previously said this with regards to the story of the mother of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when Allah *the Almighty* said to her: '...then when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear nor grieve...' (*al-Qasas*: 7). By Allah, would you accept or would you fear for your child if you cast him into the sea? Would you accept to save him from a probable death in favour of certain death? However, she believed, affirmed, and carried out what she had to do because Allah *the Almighty* had turned her heart. What the All-Merciful decreed cannot be opposed or nullified by what Satan has decreed. This is why Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart...' (*al-Anfal*: 24). This matter happened with the Pharaoh, but Allah *the Almighty* intervened between him and his heart and what he wanted; he was looking for children to kill. Then a child came to him in a box that had been cast into the sea and in a way that was doubtful and questionable. Despite that, he accepted him, raised him and nurtured him to the extent that he affirmed his wife when she said about the boy, as Allah *the Almighty* says: '...A refreshment of the eye to me and to you...' (*al-Qasas*: 9). Therefore, this is foolishness, but on behalf of whom? It is on behalf of the Pharaoh, who claimed divinity when he said to the people: 'I am your Lord All-Highest!' Then, when we reflect on the story, we find other proofs of the foolishness of this man. The magicians said to him: 'Indeed your kingdom will come to an end at the hand of child who will be born from the

Children of Israel, so as long as you believe in this prophecy, why are you killing children?’

Therefore, Allah's Decrees must inevitably be realised, and He prepares their means for them. This is the meaning of Allah's saying: ‘...His parents implore Allah for help...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 17). They say: ‘O Lord! You have power over everything and You are beyond means. There is nothing we can do with this son and it pains us to leave him in his disbelief and be ruined.’ Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* taught him to seek refuge in Allah, whenever he *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* is in distress, he would get up and pray⁽¹⁾ in order to stand in front of his Lord Who would relieve every hardship and Who would ease every difficulty. The word: ‘...Believe...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 17) means: ‘articulate the testimony of faith and acknowledge that Allah is the one God.’ There are different variations of the word *aaman* (believe) in the Noble Quran with different meanings. You say: ‘*Amantu bi* (I believe in) Allah’, and this verb is transitive with the word *ba*, meaning: I bear witness and I affirm. ‘*Amantu lahu*’: It means I believe in what he is saying, as in Allah's saying: ‘...and you will not believe us...’ (*Yusuf*: 17) meaning: you will not affirm and trust him, that is, I have placed my trust in him. In their statement: ‘...Allah's Promise is true...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 17), they are stressing this fact to him. As long as it is true, then it will happen and there is no escape from it because Allah is one God and He has no partner. No one can nullify this promise or oppose it. He is the fully Capable, the All-Powerful and He can carry out whatever He has promised. This is why Allah *the Almighty* says regarding the Last Hour: ‘Allah's Commandment has come, therefore do not desire to hasten it; glory be to Him, and highly exalted be He above what they associate (with Him)’ (*an-Nahl*: 1). This is in the past tense because Allah's Promise is the same, be it in the past, present or future, as He is the Creator of time and He is its Owner. He does what He wants with it. Thus He uses the past tense to indicate the future because He knows that there is no force that can oppose it.

(1) *In his Musnad (5/388), Imam Ahmad; Abu Dawud Sunnan, Hadith no (1319); Abu Dawud narrated that Hudhayfa said: ‘When the Prophet's situation became difficult, he would pray.’*

Therefore, the Resurrection that will come in the future has actually already come and it is an event regarding which there is no doubt. This is why He freely administers the universe with His Testimony for Himself, as the first one to believe is Allah, Who believes with His Essence. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Allah bears witness that there is no god but He...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 18). Thus, Allah testified on behalf of His Essence before anyone from His creation testified to this. It is as if He, with this testimony, is fully engaged with everything that He wants and He knows that none of it will be impossible and that it is nothing other than ‘Be!’ and it is. Likewise, Prophet Muhammad *Allah’s peace be upon him* testifies to the Message on behalf of himself before anyone else testifies to it. It is narrated that Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah *may Allah be pleased with him* once owed a debt to a Jewish man and he promised him that once his date palm bore fruit, he would pay off his debt. When the time for bearing fruit had come, his date palm did not produce what he had hoped for and Jabir *may Allah be pleased with him* was unable to discharge the debt. So, some of Jabir’s brothers went to Prophet Muhammad *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* and related the story to him, so he sent for the Jewish man and said to him: ‘Give Jabir more time so that he can pay his due.’ The man responded: ‘No, O Abu Qasim’, so Prophet Muhammad *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* repeated himself: ‘Give Jabir more time.’ Again he responded: ‘No, O Abu Al-Qasim’. So, Prophet Muhammad *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* left him and went to Jabir’s orchard and walked through it. Then he said: ‘Where is your bower, O Jabir?’ Jabir *may Allah be pleased with him* then took Prophet Muhammad *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* and sat him in his bower wherein he *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* said: ‘Leave me here, O Jabir. Go and cut off and pay back what you owe.’ So, Jabir *may Allah be pleased with him* went to his date palms and cut of what he needed to pay back his debt and there was enough left to suffice him. Then he came back to Prophet Muhammad *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* with a plate of fresh, ripe dates and said to him: ‘O Messenger of Allah, I have paid off what I owed and I have left over an amount greater than any previous year.’ At that point, Prophet Muhammad *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* laughed and said: ‘I bear witness that I am the Messenger of Allah.’⁽¹⁾ Allah’s saying: ‘...Allah’s promise is

(1) *In his Sahih, Hadith no. (5023), Al-Bukhari narrated from the Hadith of Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah, which states that Prophet Muhammad Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him said: ‘I bear witness that I am the Messenger of Allah.’*

true...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 17) means that His Promise is True and it will not be broken. The truth is firm and established and it does not change because He *the Almighty* is the One Who decides it and decrees it. No one can change it. This is why Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Such has been the course of Allah that has indeed run before, and you shall not find a change in Allah’s Course’ (*al-Fath*: 23). Allah’s saying: ‘...but still he replies, ‘These are nothing but ancient fables,’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 17) means that this stubborn son says to his parents while they are calling on him to have faith in the Resurrection: ‘Indeed what you are saying is nothing but fables of the ancients, and they are their lies and stories that have come in their books.’ He means ‘what you are calling me to is a lie which is similar to fables and fairy tales.’

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِي أَمْرٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ
قَبْلِهِمْ مِنَ الْإِنْسِ وَإِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا خَاسِرِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

**The verdict has been passed on such people, along with
all the communities that went before them, jinn and
human: they are lost [18] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 18)**

We notice that the speech in the previous verse was being made by a singular speaker, that is, the one who said to his parents: ‘...Fie upon you...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 17), but here the True Lord *the Almighty* refers to him in the plural: ‘...such people...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 18). Thus, He brings the decision and He informs of it: ‘The verdict has been passed on such people...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 18). It is as if this should not be understood as singular but rather as plural, as in Allah’s saying: ‘I swear by the time, [1] Most surely man is in loss [2] Except those who believe [3]...’ (*al-’Asr*: 1-3). Thus, the plural is made as an exception to the singular. They said regarding this verse what they said about the previous verse which is that it was revealed down with regards to ‘Abd Ar-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr *may Allah be pleased with him*. Yet this opinion does not fit with the meaning of the verse because ‘Abd Ar-Rahman *may Allah be pleased with him* became a good Muslim. This verse is talking about those who are due for punishment, so it must have been sent down with regards to someone else, not ‘Abd Ar-Rahman *may Allah be pleased with him*. With regards

to this issue, a story⁽¹⁾ is mentioned in the books of history. This is due to the fact that Marwan ibn Al-Hakam *may Allah be pleased with him* who was the ruler of Medina, is the one who said that this verse was sent down concerning 'Abd Ar-Rahman. When Mu'awiya *may Allah be pleased with him* pledged the Caliphate to his son Yazid *may Allah be pleased with him* he asked Marwan to pledge allegiance to him, and 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr *may Allah be pleased with him* objected to this. He said: 'Have you made it hereditary?' meaning a monarchy in which the son succeeds his father. He said: 'Be quiet, you!' Then he said: 'Do you know who this is? This is the one of whom Allah says: '...But some say to their parents 'Fie upon both of you'...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 17). This statement reached 'Aisha *may Allah be pleased with her* whereupon she said: 'By Allah, it is not him and if I wanted to say the name of whom it referred to, I would, but say to Marwan: 'Indeed Allah has cursed you because of your father.' This is because, one day, Al-Hakam ibn Al-'As⁽²⁾ was imitating the walk of Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* in a mocking way. Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* turned and saw him⁽³⁾ and pointed at him with his hand, and thus he was exiled to Ta'if. After the high rank that he had enjoyed in Medina, he became a shepherd until 'Uthman *may Allah be pleased with him* interceded on his behalf to him *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* and he was allowed to return. However, the Companions said: 'we did not hear this from Messenger Muhammad', so 'Uthman said: 'I heard it.' Allah's saying: '...The verdict has been passed on...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 18) means that it is necessary and established that they will have the punishment that We have warned them about. As for Allah's saying: '...along with all the communities that went before them...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 18), it means that many nations before them had elapsed and gone. Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying, '...jinn and human: they are lost' (*al-Ahqaf*: 18). This is because He *the Almighty* said about the believers: 'Successful indeed are the believers' (*al-Mu'minun*: 1). Thus the

(1) The story of Al-Hakam ibn Al-'As states that the person who told his parents 'Uff' is 'Abu Al-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr and 'Aisha's response to that.

(2) The story of Al-Hakam ibn Al-'As mocking at the walk of Prophet Muhammad

(3) See Ar-Razi, *Mafatih Al-Ghayb*, his commentary on (*Al-Humaza*: 1); see also Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum Ad-Din*.

opposite is that the disbelievers and deniers shall be lost. This verse proves that the jinn are also legally responsible; among them are the obedient and the disobedient, the believer and the disbeliever, and this is why He *the Almighty* says in the chapter of *al-Jinn*: ‘And as to the deviators, they are fuel of hell’ (*al-Jinn*: 15). Therefore, they will be punished with what suits their nature.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَلِكُلِّ دَرَجَةٌ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوا وَلِيُوَفِّيَهُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

**Everyone will be ranked according to their deeds and
God will repay them in full for what they have done:
they will not be wronged [19] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 19)**

Allah’s saying, ‘Everyone will be...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 19) refers to both the two categories: the believers who have been mentioned in Allah’s saying: ‘(As for) those who say: Our Lord is Allah, then continue in the right way...’ (*Fussilat*: 30), and the disbelievers of whom Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘The verdict has been passed on such people...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 18). The believers and the disbelievers, the obedient and the disobedient, each of them will have their reward according to their degree and rank: ‘...Everyone will be ranked according to their deeds...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 19). It is known that paradise has degrees, whilst the fire –we seek refuge in Allah – has descending steps. This is why Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Surely the hypocrites are in the lowest stage of the fire...’ (*an-Nisa*: 145). However, here He has made degrees for both the believers and the disbelievers. How?

Some scholars are of the opinion that this is a means of mocking and ridiculing them and also of rebuking them, exactly as in Allah’s saying: ‘Hence, give them the tiding of a painful punishment’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 24). It is known that punishment is not something of which you give tidings. Tidings are only for things that bring joy and happiness. This is mocking, as in Allah’s saying: ‘Taste; you forsooth are the mighty, the honourable’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 49). He *the Almighty* says this even though in this situation he, the disbeliever is humiliated, chastised, and scorned. Or, He called them degrees in order to vex them and increase their feelings of pain and grief. Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘...Allah will repay them in full for what they have done...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 19).

The word *wafa* ' (repay) means to give a complete reward without anything missing such as you saying: 'I repaid (*waffaytu*) my debt to so-and-so,' which means 'I gave it to him in full.' Allah's saying: '...they will not be wronged,' (*al-Ahqaf*: 19) means that nothing will be deducted from their rewards whatsoever.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَلَى النَّارِ أَدَهَبْتُمْ طَبَقَتِكُمْ فِي حَيَاتِكُمُ الدُّنْيَا
وَأَسْتَمْتُمْ بِهَا فَالْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُونِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ فِي
الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَإِذَا كُنْتُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ

On the Day when those who deny the truth are brought before the Fire, it will be said to them, 'You squandered the good things you were given in your earthly life, you took your fill of pleasure there, so on this Day a punishment of shame is yours: you were arrogant on earth without any right, and exceeded all limits' [20] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 20)

The meaning here is: Remember, O Prophet Muhammad, the Day when those who have disbelieved will be brought before the fire. Thus, whenever you examine a circumstance, look for the event that takes place in it because time is not intrinsically praiseworthy or blameworthy. Rather, being praiseworthy or blameworthy is determined according to the action that takes place in it. The event here is that those who have disbelieved are being shown to the fire, but who is being shown to whom? The fire is not a rational being while the disbelievers are. The fire is being shown to them, exactly as you say: 'I showed the material to the customer.' However, on the Day of Resurrection, it will be made clear to them that the fire is a material being and they are the ones who will be shown to it. This is proved by Allah's saying: 'On the day that We will say to hell: Are you filled up? And it will say: Are there any more?' (*Qaf*: 30) It is also affirmed by the Noble Hadith that it, i.e. the fire yearns for its people; the disbelievers and the disobedient, and that it speaks and articulates. The True Lord *the Almighty* address whatever He wants with whatever He wants. Therefore, we do not understand this verse according to

human laws because Allah *the Almighty* has other laws with things. This is why if Allah *the Almighty* were to teach them to any of His creation, He would teach them and deal with them, as we have seen in the story of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'So We made Solomon to understand it...' (*al-Anbiya*: 79). He understood the language of animals and birds. This is why when he heard the ant and understood it, he smiled and laughed at what it had said, and he thanked the One Who had bestowed this blessing upon him. Some scholars say that the verse contains an inversion, as if you were to say: 'I showed the pond the camel.' The actual fact is that you show the camel the pond, so that it can drink from it.

Allah's saying: '...You squandered the good things you were given in your earthly life, you took your fill of pleasure there...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 20) means that this speech is said to them in the Hereafter after the Last Hour has been established, but there is another verse that some people think contradicts this. It is Allah's saying: 'The Fire; they shall be brought before it (every) morning and evening and on the day when the hour shall come to pass: Make pharaoh's people enter the severest chastisement,' (*Ghafir*: 46). They understand from this that the showing takes place in the life of this world because His saying: '...and on the day when the hour shall come to pass...' (*Ghafir*: 46) is conjoined to it. However, the one who reflects on the verse will find that the showing is not in the life of this world and not in the Hereafter, but rather in the *barzakh* (life in the grave). How? It is because morning and evening are a result of the sun's movement and the presence of night and day, and there is none of this in the Hereafter. In the Hereafter, there is no sun or moon, or night or day; Allah says: 'On the day when the earth shall be changed into a different earth and the heavens (as well)...' (*Ibrahim*: 48). In the worldly life, we live according to means. As for the Hereafter, we live according to the Will of Allah *the Almighty* the Original Founder of causes. The sun gives us light in the worldly life. As for the Hereafter, Allah says: 'And the earth shall beam with the light of its Lord...' (*az-Zumar*: 69). It is thus clear that *Al-'Ard* will be in the grave. Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and on the day when the hour shall come to pass: Make pharaoh's people enter the severest chastisement.' (*Ghafir*: 46) The Hereafter is not for showing, but rather for being admitted into the fire, as the showing in the first is not the showing in the second. What informs you

that before they enter the fire it will be shown to them? This is due to the fact that *As-Sirat* (the bridge) is fixed over the surface of hell, so they are shown to the fire before they enter it. Allah's saying: '...You squandered the good things you were given in your earthly life, you took your fill of pleasure there...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 20). This verse has solved some problems for us, in that we see that the people of disbelief and heresy have more wealth and embellishment than we do in the life of this world, and some people ask about the inventors and discoverers who are not Muslims and who served humanity with their knowledge. Will they have any reward for what they did? The answer is '...You squandered the good things you were given in your earthly life...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 20). There is no share in the Hereafter left for them, as this is eternally decreed in Allah's Standard Practice that does not change. This is because Allah *the Almighty* has given means to the believers and the disbelievers. Whoever has done well with regards to the means will not be denied the fruits of his goodness even if he is a disbeliever; and whoever sits around and languishes will be denied, even if he is a believer because this is the gift of Lordship. As for those who provided this gift to humanity and served them in this way, were they thinking about Allah *the Almighty*? No, never. They were thinking about civilisation, progress and serving history and mankind, and they have taken their reward of having a reputation and legacy that perpetuates their memory. People have erected statues of them and written books about them. Therefore, take their reward from those whom they worked for, and that is the end of the matter. This is why Allah *the Almighty* says in describing the state of these people: 'And (as for) those who disbelieve, their deeds are like the mirage in a desert, which the thirsty man deems to be water until when he comes to it he finds it to be naught, and there he finds Allah, so He pays back to him his reckoning in full; and Allah is quick in reckoning' (*an-Nur*: 39). They are surprised that Allah *the Almighty* will hold them accountable for their deeds, even though they were not thinking about Him when they were doing their deeds. This is the state of the disbelievers. As for the believers, they do their deeds in the worldly life with an eye on the Hereafter. It has been transmitted that Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* passed by the People of the Ledge (*As-Suffa*) and he found them wearing torn clothes with which they could not find anything to

patch. So he said to them: 'Which of your days is best? Is it today or the day you come with a massive grapevine and you go with a massive grapevine, you come in one suit of clothes and you go in another suit of clothes, and on your doors are veils like the veils of the *Ka'ba*?'⁽¹⁾ 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz *may Allah be pleased with him* was well known, before he became a Caliph, as a pampered youth who had luxuries at his disposal, night and day. He would even wear silk, and the servants who would wash his clothes would take bribes from people to wash their clothes in the same water that the clothes of 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* were washed in because of the how much perfume and musk they had in them. When he became the Caliph, he did without these luxuries and he lived a life of abstinence and asceticism, and he wore coarse clothes. When he was asked about this he said: 'By Allah, if I wanted I could eat better than any of you and be better dressed than any of you, but I am storing up my delights for the Hereafter,'⁽²⁾ and even though I have a longing soul – he means, it desires betterment – it longed for leadership and when it had obtained it, it longed for the Caliphate; yet when it had obtained that, it longed for Paradise.'⁽³⁾ This is why it has been transmitted from 'Aisha *may Allah be pleased with her* that she said: 'A crescent moon passed followed by another crescent moon and then another crescent moon,' meaning: three months passed, and no fire was lit in Muhammad's house. It was said: 'What do you eat?' She said: 'Water and dates.'⁽⁴⁾ However, Prophet Muhammad

(1) See *At-Tabarani, Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir, Hadith no. (8086) from Talha ibn 'Amr; see also Kanz Al-'Ummal, Hadith no. (6226-6236).*

(2) This statement is mentioned in the sources and references as being attributed to 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab and not 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz. The statement has been attributed to the former by *At-Tabari, Al-Qurtubi, Ar-Razi, An-Nasafi, An-Nisaburi, Az-Zamakhshari, As-Suyuti, Abu Bakr Al-Jaza'iri and Al-Jasas* in all of their *Quranic commentaries*.

(3) In his *Al-Aghani*, Abu Al-Faraj Al-Asfahani mentioned that 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz said to Dukayn: 'Indeed my soul has never obtained anything without then longing for that which is superior to it. I obtained the utmost of the life of this world and then my soul longed for the Hereafter. By Allah, I have not deprived any of the people of their wealth and all I have is a thousand *dirhams*, so take half of it.' See *Ibn Hamdun, At-Tadhkira Al-Hamduniyya and Ibn Qutayba, Ash-Shi'r wa Ash-Shu'ara' in the chapter on Dukayn Ar-Rajiz*.

(4) Agreed upon, authentic Hadith; see, *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no (2379, 5978); see also Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no (5282) from the Hadith of 'Aisha*.

Allah's peace and blessings be upon him had neighbours from the Helpers who used to give him *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* some of their milk to drink. Therefore, the house of Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* was a model and example for the poor. Allah the Almighty says: '...in your earthly life (*dunya*)...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 20); by Allah, when you think of the meaning of the word *dunya* (the lowest), can you find any description that is lower and less than this? When you hear the word *dunya*, you must inevitably be reminded of its opposite, which then must be described as being '*ulya* (the highest), and it is the life in which there is reward. Allah's saying: '...so on this Day a punishment of shame is yours...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 20) means that on the Day of Resurrection, you will be punished for your deeds with the suffering of humiliation, means, disgrace and abasement because you were arrogant in the worldly life with regards to accepting the Truth. From this word *hun* (humiliation), we get the word *hawn* which is the device in which we crush things in the kitchen. It is a device that grinds crushes and pulverises the substance that is placed in it. It is as if the suffering that they will receive will crush their arrogance and make them humiliated and disgraced. Allah's saying: '...you were arrogant...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 20) means that those deniers of the Truth will be punished because of their arrogance and self-exaltation with regards to accepting the Truth. As for Allah's saying: '...on earth without any right...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 20), it proves that there is arrogance that is right, which is to show arrogance towards the arrogant. This is why it was said: 'Arrogance towards the arrogant is charity.'⁽¹⁾ This is why Hamza *may Allah be pleased with him* would wear a red death band in battle, and he would raise his sword and then walk between the rows in a haughty manner. Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* looked at him and said: 'This is walk that Allah hates, except in this situation.'⁽²⁾ And he said: 'May Allah have mercy on the person who makes himself look strong in

(1) In his *Rasa'il Al-Intiqad* (1/9), *Ibn Sharaf Al-Qayrawani* mentioned that: 'Treat this category of people by turning away from them, turning your nose up at them and not mentioning them or thinking about them, it means, arrogance, even if you are not from the people of arrogance.' As for those who understand it to be a *Hadith*, this is not correct.

(2) See *At-Tabarani, Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir, Hadith no (6388); Abu Na'im, Ma'rifat As-Sahaba, Hadith no. (3220).*

front of them.’⁽¹⁾ We understand from the verses of the Noble Quran that the believer is not described as having one character and one outward form. Rather, the situation that he lives in dictates what character is suited to that situation. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those with him are firm of heart against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves...’ (*al-Fath*: 29). He *the Almighty* also says: ‘...lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 54). Therefore, he is proud in one situation and humble in another situation, firm in one situation and full of mercy in another situation; he gathers between two opposites because the situation differs from one case to another. Then Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and exceeded all limits’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 20). Therefore, there is arrogance and there is iniquity. Arrogance is to be conceited towards accepting the Truth, while *fisq* (iniquity) means to take a date out of its skin. In their evenness, dates have life spans. When they reach their complete size, they begin to have a red or yellow colour, and then they moisten and have a skin. If they are in dry climate, they become hard and dry and the skin sticks to the flesh of the date, and these are the best kinds of dates. The meaning of *fisq* here is to leave the way of obedience; and when you reflect on arrogance and iniquity; you find that they bring together the deeds of the heart and the deeds of the limbs. Man has a heart and an outward form; the heart is the place of secrets and hidden things and it is also the place of sincerity or ostentation, the place of humility or self-exaltation, as arrogance is from the deeds of the heart. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And they denied them unjustly and proudly while their soul had been convinced of them...’ (*an-Naml*: 14). As for iniquity, it is to exit from obedience which is concerned with the deeds of the limbs.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

(1) See Ibn Kathir, *As-Sira An-Nabawiyya*, (4/430) and *Subul Al-Huda wa Ar-Rashad*, (5/192) and *As-Suhayli, Ar-Rawd Al-Unuf*, (4/113).

وَأَذْكُرْ أَخَا عَادٍ إِذْ أَنْذَرَ قَوْمَهُ بِالْأَحْقَافِ وَقَدْ خَلَّتِ النُّذُرُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٢١﴾

Mention [Hud] of the tribe of 'Ad: he warned his people among the sand dunes – other warners have come and gone both before and after him – ‘Worship no one but God: I fear for you, that you will be punished on a terrible Day’ [21] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 21)

Allah’s saying: ‘Mention...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 21) means: ‘Remember, O Prophet Muhammad’; it is as if this reminder has come to remind him *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* of the situations that his brothers from among the Messengers went through in the procession of faith. The meaning thus is ‘look at those who came before you and what they had to bear for the sake of the call. Thus, you are nothing new with regards to the Messengers.’ Indeed, they bore with difficulty and harm, but Allah spoke the truth when He promised to give them victory in the end. This is why you notice in the style of the Noble Quran that the number of times the one story is mentioned is according to the number of events that happen to the Messenger. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And all we relate to you of the accounts of the apostles is to strengthen your heart therewith...’ (*Hud*: 120). Whenever something happened to Allah’s Messenger and his people, Allah would remind him of one of the situations of the previous Prophets *peace be upon them*, in order to reassure him and make his heart firm upon the truth. As long as every Prophet was exposed to harm in accordance with his mission, then there is no doubt that you will be the Messenger that is exposed to the most harm because you are the last of all of them. Allah’s saying: ‘...the tribe of ‘Ad...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 21) refers to Prophet Hud (Eber) *peace be upon him*. He *the Almighty* says: ‘And to ‘Ad (We sent) their brother Hud...’ (*al-A‘raf*: 65). The word *akha* (brother) has two plural forms: *ikhwa* and *ikhwan*. *Ikhwa* refers to brotherhood of lineage, as in Allah’s saying: ‘And Yusuf’s brothers came...’ (*Yusuf*: 58). As for *ikhwan*, it refers to the brotherhood of a way, religion, and values, a meaning which is clear in Allah’s saying: ‘... (they shall be) as brethren, on raised couches, face to face’ (*al-Hijr*: 47). Thus, Allah’s saying: ‘...that brother of [the tribe of] ‘Ad...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 21) means their brother in lineage, and ‘Ad is the tribe or the

community to whom Hud (Eber) *peace be upon him* was sent. The genitive construction in Allah's saying: '...that brother of [the tribe of] 'Ad...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 21) is a means of softening them and invoking feelings of mercy and kinship, as the one who came to them was not a stranger to them. He was in fact a brother of theirs. A Divine Way of Guidance came to them that went against what they were upon, and their Prophet wanted to get them out of the misguidance and corruption to which they had become accustomed. A brother never cheats his brother regardless of whether their brotherhood is one of lineage or one of religion, way, and values. Therefore, they must receive his call with the affection that brotherhood requires. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Mention [Hud] of the tribe of 'Ad: he warned his people among the sand dunes...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 21). The 'Ad are a bygone group of Arabs that lived in sand dunes in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula. The word *ahqaf* (sand dunes) is the plural of the word *hiqf* which means that sand spread out; it becomes taller and shorter and it also moves right and left, here and there. Sand, due to its fineness, is moved by wind and windstorms very easily such that one gust from a windstorm in this place would bury and cover a caravan in this valley. This is why, even until now, the remains of the people of 'Ad have not emerged because they are buried over vast distances under the sand. Likewise, ancient ruins in every place are only found under the earth during excavations because the factors of erosion bury them. This is why if one of us was to travel, for example, and leave his home for a number of months, he would return and find it covered in a layer of dust even if it is locked as best as possible. So, what do you think about the empty space with the winds and windstorms blowing? In the chapter of *al-Fajr*, the True Lord *the Almighty* gives us a glimpse of the history of these communities and the punishment that befell them, saying: 'Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with 'Ad, [6] (The people of) Iram, possessors of lofty buildings, [7] The like of which were not created in the (other) cities; [8] And (with) Thamud, who hewed out the rocks in the valley, [9] And (with) Pharaoh, the lord of hosts, [10] Who committed inordinacy in the cities, [11] So they made great mischief therein? [12] Therefore your Lord let down upon them a portion of the chastisement. [13] Most sure your Lord is watching [14]' (*al-Fajr*: 7-14). Until now, we do not know where their homes are or where their remains are,

except what Allah *the Almighty* has informed us of, and this is because they are spread out over vast distances inside the earth. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...other warners have come and gone both before and after him...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 21). This means that he is not the first Messenger to come to them and he is not the last, as Messengers have passed: ‘...other warners have come and gone both before and after him...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 21). The word *nudhur* (admonisher) is the plural of *nadheer* which means the person who instils fear in you and alerts you about evil before it is time. The benefit of warning is that it makes you aware of danger before it happens so that you can avoid it and the warning must be made some time before the occurrence of the evil so that you are able to take steps to prevent the matter and avoid falling into it. Allah’s saying: ‘...Worship no one but Allah...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 21) means that this issue is one that all the Messengers *peace be upon them* agree on, before Hud (Eber) and after him *peace be upon him*. No religion has come except to serve this issue and call people to it. Worship, as I have explained, means that the slave obeys the commands and prohibitions of the object of worship and this meaning invalidating and nullifying the worship of other than Allah *the Almighty*. This is because they are all false gods and worship of them is false, as they are gods with no way and no commands or prohibitions. What has the sun ever said to those who worship it? What has it ever commanded or prohibited? What reward has it prepared for those who worship it? What has it prepared for those who disbelieve in it? So you ask: ‘Why have people worshipped it and worshipped other things?’ I say: ‘It is because worship is a natural inclination within man, ever since Allah *the Almighty* has created him, and since he was in the atomic world.’ However, true worship has requirements and responsibilities that curb the defiance of people and keep their desires in check. This is why some people have resorted to a form of worship that satisfies their natural inclination for worship and excuses them with regards to the requirements of true religion. Thus, they go to false gods and worship them because they do not require anything of them and they do not make them legally responsible for anything and their desires have free rein.

Allah says: ‘...I fear for you, that you will be punished on a terrible Day’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 21). This fear is a requirement of brotherhood, as a brother is eager for the benefit of his brother and eager for his salvation. This is why Allah *the*

Almighty says about Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Certainly a Messenger has come to you from among yourselves; grievous to him is your falling into distress, excessively solicitous respecting you; to the believers (he is) compassionate' (*at-Tawba*: 128). Here, the day of suffering is described as an awesome day and in your daily lives you describe some things as being awesome. This awesomeness in your material existence will eventually come to an end, regardless of how long it lasts. Likewise, every blessing in this worldly life will cause trouble for its owner in one of two ways: either the blessing will escape him, or he will escape the blessing and leave it when he dies. Thus, this day is described as awesome because it is permanent and never-ending, and the one experiencing it will never die and thus have respite from it.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

قَالُوا أَجِئْنَا لِنُفَكِّكَ عَنْ ءَالِهَتِنَا فَإِنَّا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِن كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

But they said, 'Have you come to turn us away from our gods? If what you say is true, bring down that punishment you threaten us with!' [22] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 22)

The speech here is about the people of Hud (Eber) *peace be upon him* for when they were called to worship Allah Alone, '...they said, 'Have you come to turn us away from our gods...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 22)? This is in reference to their so-called gods. The word *ifk* means to turn something on its face, to turn the truth into falsehood, and truthfulness into lying. A variation of this word is found in Allah's saying: 'And the overthrown cities did He overthrow,' (*an-Najm*: 53) and they are the towns that Allah turned upside down. Allah's saying: '...bring down that punishment you threaten us with...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 22) refers to the suffering they will face in the Hereafter. The suffering that He *the Almighty* is promising them with is not coming immediately. Rather, it is on the Day of Resurrection, but they are hastening it. This is why He addresses them with this statement: 'And when it comes to pass, will you believe in it? What! Now (you believe), and already you wished to have it hastened on,' (*Yunus*: 51) and He *the Almighty* also says: '(It is) the day on which they shall be tried at the fire [13] Taste your persecution! This is what you would hasten on [14]' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 13-14).

They are hastening the suffering because they do not believe in it and they deny it. If they had believed in it, they would not have hastened it.

Then he responded to them with the normal answer:

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَعْلَمُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأُبَلِّغُكُمْ مَا أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ. وَلَكِنِّي أَرَىٰكُمْ قَوْمًا بَجْهَلُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

He said, ‘Only God knows when it will come: I simply convey to you the message I am sent with but I can see you are an insolent people’ [23] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 23)

That is, the knowledge of the Last Hour rests with Allah *the Almighty* alone: ‘...none will reveal its time except Him...’ (*al-A‘raf*: 187), and I am only a Messenger conveying to you what my Lord has sent me with: ‘...but I see that you are a people given to ignorance!’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 23)

The summation of the matter is that you are ignorant. In other words, ignorant of matters relating to truth. Ignorance constituted the greatest problem faced by the Messengers of Allah *peace be upon them*. Some people think that ignorance is lack of knowledge, but ignorance is knowledge that contradicts the truth.

Therefore, we said that an illiterate person who knows nothing and lacks a cause or subject in life is in a less worse situation than an ignorant person. This is because his mind is empty; when he receives information, he accepts it. In the case of an ignorant person, the knowledge he possesses contradicts the truth, so he needs to be emptied of it first. Consequently, calling him to the truth is more difficult.

Allah’s saying: ‘...I convey to you that wherewith I have been sent...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 23) means to say: I have not come of my own accord. Rather, I have been summoned to call you to Allah, so the action must be attributed to the One Who does it. ‘...I have been sent...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 23), that is, from Allah *the Almighty* as we said with regards to ‘Exalted is He Who took His Servant for a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque (in Mecca) to the *Aqsa Mosque* (in Jerusalem)...’ (*al-Isra’*: 1). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not say: ‘I travelled by night’ but rather ‘I was taken for a journey by night.’

This means that they were lying when they said: ‘...have you come to us...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 22) because he did not come of his own accord, Rather, he was sent by Allah *the Almighty* to convey His Message: ‘...and the duty of the Messenger is only to convey (the Message) plainly’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 18). That is, I am only sent to deliver the Message, and I do not know when the punishment will come. The only One Who knows it is the One Who can inflict it.

‘...But I see that you are a people given to ignorance!’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 23) This means that you are ignorant of the fact that the Messenger has come to convey Allah’s Message. He does not know when the punishment will be inflicted on those who deny Him.

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ عَارِضًا مُّسْتَقْبِلَ أَوْدِيهِمْ قَالُوا هَذَا عَارِضٌ مُّمْطِرُنَا
بَلْ هُوَ مَا اسْتَعْجَلْتُمْ بِهِ رِيحٌ فِيهَا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٤﴾

When they saw a cloud approaching their valley, they said, ‘This cloud will give us rain!’ ‘No indeed! It is what you wanted to hasten: a storm wind bearing a painful punishment [24] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 24)

After they had hastened the punishment by saying: ‘...bring us that with which you threaten us, if you are one of the truthful’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 24), a torment came to them in the form of a cloud. ‘So when they saw it as a cloud appearing in the sky...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 24), that is, a cloud obstructing the air in the sky advancing ‘...towards their valleys...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 24), that is, coming towards them ‘...they said, ‘this is a cloud which will give us rain’...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 24), that is, they thought it was a normal cloud that would pour rain on their valleys and bring them goodness. Therefore, the pronoun ‘it’ in ‘...so when they saw it...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 24) is referring to the cloud because it is identifiable from the context; the proof being their statement ‘which will give us rain.’ Only clouds bring rain. Thus, the context proves that it is a cloud.

In its style, the Noble Quran often relies on the context to clarify what the pronoun is referring to, leaving the matter to the discernment of the intellect. You can read, for example: ‘And if Allah were to punish people for that which they earned, He would not leave a moving (living) creature on its

surface...' (*Fatir*: 45). What is meant here is the surface of the earth even though it is not mentioned in the context. But the earth is what crosses the mind, as nothing else can be understood from the statement.

The rule is that the pronoun must have an antecedent reference. There is no third-person pronoun that does not have a referent except in one case which is if the absent third-person refers to the Absolute Unseen, and that is the True Lord *the Exalted*. They deduced this from His statement: 'Say: He (*huwa*) is Allah, the One,' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1), where the pronoun '(*huwa*; he)' refers to Allah *the Almighty* because it can only refer to Him. You may say: 'Zayd came and I honoured him,' that is, I honoured Zayd. Also, when you say: 'Fatima came and I honoured her.' The pronoun 'her' refers to Fatima, and so forth. The reference of the pronoun has the same antecedent. Such as when I say: 'A man came to me and I honoured him,' that is, I honoured the man. The pronoun can also refer to other than the referent such as when I say: 'I gave charity of a *dirham* and half of it.' The 'it' in 'half of it' does not refer to the aforementioned dirham, but rather to a *dirham* like it. Therefore, it refers to half a *dirham* like it.

However, why did they think that the dense, looming cloud would bring them rain? Some scholars said: 'It is because they were in drought and famine, and they were waiting for water. Then they saw a cloud obstructing the horizon, and they noticed that it was dark and moving slowly. These are the signs of a rain cloud, because the slowest bucket is the one that is full and overflowing. Likewise, the slowest cloud is the one that is most burdened. The slowness of the cloud indicated that it was carrying water and they were looking up for rain, so they thought it was rain. Therefore, it gave them the hope of rainfall, as all the signs indicated this. Then, their hopes were suddenly dashed. When hopes are raised and then suddenly dashed, this causes a kind of grief and sorrow, which is called 'despair following hope.'

This, on its own, is a method of torture used, for example, by those in charge of punishing in prisons. They deny the inmate water until his thirst becomes intense, and he pleads for something to drink. Then the soldier comes with a cup of water and brings it close to him until it is touching his lips, and then he throws it on the ground. This is a form of pain and torture. It would have been

less painful if he had not brought the water in the first place. Indeed, bringing the water in front of him causes a greater hardship than that of thirst.

The same goes for these people. They were looking up for rain and they said: 'It will relieve us of the drought that we are in,' and then suddenly it sent torment down upon them instead of water. It turned out to be the very punishment that they had denied and asked that it come upon them swiftly. '...Nay! It is what you sought to hasten on...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 24), that is, the punishment came in the form of '...a wind in which is a painful punishment' (*al-Ahqaf*: 24).

We said that when the word (*rih*; wind) appears in the singular form, it indicates that it is carrying punishment and evil. Thus, Allah's statement ('...a wind...') means that it is a general punishment, and then He breaks it down into detail: '...in which is a painful punishment' (*al-Ahqaf*: 24). But if the word is plural, i.e. (*riyah*; winds), then it indicates goodness; as in Allah's statement: '...and in the turning about of the winds...' (*al-Jathiya*: 5) because the alteration of the wind direction moves clouds, drives ships, pollinates flowers and so forth. Hence says the supplication made at the time of heavy wind, mentioned in the Hadith: 'O Allah, make it winds, and not a wind.'⁽¹⁾

We previously explained that the winds are a power and force that bring benefit when they come from all directions, and they are destructive when they come from one direction. Creating a vacuum of air is now a science that has laws, and people use it in demolition.

Furthermore, air itself is an essential aspect of life; without it there would not be any life. This is why Allah *the Almighty* has made it general and widespread in the universe. No one can own it as some people own food, for example. This is because if the owner of the air were to deny you it for a moment, you would die, as opposed to water and food, for example.

Then, after that, Allah *the Almighty* goes into detail with the words: '...a wind in which is a painful punishment' (*al-Ahqaf*: 24).

(1) *It was narrated on the authority of Ibn `Abbas that when the wind blew, the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him would turn his face towards it, keel, stretch out his hands and say: 'O Allah, I beg of You the good of this wind and the good of that which has been sent therewith. And I seek refuge with You from its evil and the evil of that which has been sent therewith. O Allah make it a mercy, not a torment. O Allah, make it winds, not a wind.'* [Narrated by At-Tabarani in *Al-Mu`jam Al-Kabir* 11368].

تُدْمِرُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ بِأَمْرِ رَبِّهَا فَاصْبَحُوا لَا يَرَىٰ إِلَّا
مَسْكَنَهُمْ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

**Which will destroy everything by its Lord's command.
In the morning there was nothing to see except their
[ruined] dwellings: this is how We repay the guilty [25]
(The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 25)**

The words ‘Destroying everything...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 25) means devastating ‘...everything...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 25), that is, nothing at all was left of them. ‘...By the Command of its Lord...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 25), that is, its Creator and the One Who sets it in motion, as it does not destroy by its own nature, but rather by Allah’s Command to it. So instead of bringing them goodness, it brought them evil. Thus, the wind needed an additional command from Allah *the Almighty* to be transformed into an evil force that destroys instead of builds.

Only Allah *the Almighty* controls this matter. Only the Creator of the wind *the Exalted* can bring it out of its nature, as He brought the fire out of its nature in the story of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. Allah *the Almighty* said to it: ‘O fire, be coolness and safety upon Ibrahim’ (*al-Anbiya*: 69).

Therefore, the wind responded to its Lord’s Command and it destroyed them utterly, leaving nothing of their belongings behind except for the ruins of their houses. ‘...So they became such that nothing could be seen except their dwellings!’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 25) But why were their dwellings allowed to remain?

The scholars said: ‘In order to be a lesson for other people and vivid signs of their past existence and of the punishment that befell them, even though these towns are buried under the earth. These people, as we said, lived in a valley of sands, called *Ahqaf*, and these sands are what buried them.

The scholars also narrated that when Allah *the Almighty* wanted to destroy them and inflict them with the storm wind, the first person to see the approaching torment was a woman among them. She saw her house flying in the air like a bird.

Once the torment came upon them suddenly, they entered their houses, seeking shelter inside from the severity of the storms. But the wind rushed in

right after them, and the sands came in until they had buried them inside. The wind that buried them is the same wind that exposed them and brought out their corpses so that the people could learn a lesson from them. Then they were thrown into the sea.

‘...This is how...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 25) means in this way or manner ‘...We recompense the guilty people’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 25). So the requital was not unjust or aggressive, but rather, it was requital in kind and measure. They deserved this torment because they were wrongdoers.

As for those who believed in Prophet Hud (Eber) *peace be upon him* and affirmed his call, he protected them from the torment by drawing a line around their houses. It was as if his silent supplication was: ‘O Lord! These are the people who have believed in my call, so save and protect them,’ and so Allah *the Almighty* saved them.

Allah’s statement: ‘...thus do We recompense the guilty people,’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 25) is a warning and admonition for the disbelievers of Quryash meaning: ‘O disbelievers of Quraysh, take a lesson from those who denied the Messengers before you. This is the requital of every disbeliever who goes against Allah’s Way and denies His Messengers. This is a real example in front of you

وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّهُمْ فِيمَا إِن مَّكَّنَّاكُمْ فِيهِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ سَمْعًا وَبَصَرًا وَأَفْئِدَةً
فَمَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَلَا أَبْصَرُهُمْ وَلَا أَفْئِدَتُهُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِذْ كَانُوا
يَجْحَدُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

We had established them in a way we have not established you [people of Mecca]; We gave them hearing, sight, and hearts, yet their hearing, sight, and hearts were of no use to them, since they denied God’s revelations. They were overwhelmed by the punishment they had mocked [26] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 26)

This is an address to the Quraysh and draws their attention to the following: These deniers from the people of ‘Ad were more powerful than you. They surpassed you in material power and were better than you in respect of wealth, goods and outward appearance. They left a stronger impact on the

earth, and built it up. They had one of the greatest civilisations in the history of this world.

‘Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with (the tribe of) ‘Ad, [with] Iram – who had lofty pillars, the likes of whom had never been created in the land?’ (*al-Fajr*: 6-8) Despite all that, this was their end. Their power availed them nothing and their civilisation did not defend them in the slightest against Allah’s punishment. You are not more powerful than them. Thus, take heed from what happened to those who denied their Messenger. Take heed, lest you be afflicted with what afflicted them.

Allah’s statement: ‘We had established them securely in a manner in which We have never established you...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 26) means: We (Allah) enabled and empowered the people of ‘Ad. The word *tamkin* (enabling, giving power) means that We gave them power and ability and We granted them the means and resources of the life of this world so that they could do what no other nation had done.

The Arabic word (*inn*) in the part saying: ‘...in a manner in which We have never (*inn*) established you...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 26) is for negation, as in Allah’s statement: ‘...they are not [consequently] their mothers. Their mothers are none (*inn*) but those who gave birth to them...’ (*al-Mujadala*: 2). That is, their only mothers are those who gave birth to them. Here (the word stresses that) We empowered them in a way that We have not empowered you, and We granted them means that We have not granted you. Then ‘...and We had endowed them with hearing, and sight, and hearts: but neither their hearing, nor their sight, nor their hearts were of the least avail to them...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 26).

Hearing, sight and the heart are the chief means of perception in mankind. Every time they are mentioned in the Noble Quran, they are found in this form: hearing (*sam*) is singular, while sight (*absar*) and hearts (*af'idah*) are plural.

This is an example of the subtleties of expression in the Noble Quran. Hearing is not made plural because a sound is heard by everyone, as if we were one person hearing. You may be able to see the source of the sound or not see it, but you still hear it.

As for the sight, it differs from one person to the next. One person sees, while another person does not see. One person has sharp vision while another

person has weak vision, and a third person is one-eyed. Therefore, sights differ, and hearts differ as well when it comes to how things are received.

The science of physiology has confirmed that the ear is the first organ that functions in a child immediately after birth. As for the eye, it starts to see between three and ten days after birth, and then after that the intellect starts working.

This is the natural order of how these organs, which are the means of perception, start functioning. Due to the importance of hearing, Allah *the Almighty* made it the first of these sense organs to function, as it is the first organ to receive cognitions after birth. It is also the sense whose task never stops, even during sleep.

The eye, for example, does not see during sleep. As for the ear, it hears because it is the means of being woken up from sleep. Therefore, it must always be prepared to receive and hear.

We have realized this issue in the story of the People of the Cave, when Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'So We cast [a cover of sleep] over their ears within the cave for a number of years' (*al-Kahf*: 11). This is because the cave was located in a desert in which there were many unsettling sounds at night, in addition to the sounds of thunder, lightning, and wind. If their ears had been allowed to function normally, these sounds would have disturbed them, but Allah *the Almighty* drew a veil over their ears so that they would not hear.

Because hearing is the means of receiving and accepting that which has been conveyed from Allah *the Almighty* He made it the first of these senses to function. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* made it a standard practice (*sunna*) for us to give the call to prayer in the child's ear as soon as it has been born.⁽¹⁾

If the ear were not functioning at this time, the commandment would be in vain. If you said, for example: 'Does the child understand this?' we would say: 'Yes, it understands because of the covenant that was taken from Adam *peace be upon him* while we were still in the particle stage.'

(1) *The Hadith referred to was narrated by Ahmad, Abu Dawud and At-Tirmidhi, who declared it authentic on the authority of Abu Rafi' who said: 'I saw the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him announcing the adhan (the call to prayer) in the ears of Al-Hassan ibn 'Ali when Fatima gave birth to him may Allah be pleased with them.'*

Therefore, the first thing that the parents must be concerned with is to make the child hear this call: ‘*Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest)’ of everything else. This is the nucleus of faith around which all the bases of faith revolve.

You still remember our discussion regarding Allah’s statement: ‘But [there is many a one] who says to his parents [whenever they try to persuade him to believe in Allah], ‘Fie upon you both...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 17). What are these parents preoccupied with at this stage of their child’s life? They are not thinking about primary school and then secondary school and university, at all. They are concerned with that which is most worthy and most important, which is religion and creed. This is the first concern with regards to small children so that they grow up in accordance with it. This is why we receive the newborn children with the words of the call to prayer in order to instil it within them, while their minds are clear and their hearts are pure. Thus, these words take root in the children and establish themselves securely in them, and they never leave them. A poet⁽¹⁾ once expressed:

Passion for her came to me before I knew what passion was

So it came across a heart that was empty, and it established itself securely⁽²⁾

We said that hearing precedes sight, and this is in the life of this world. But in the Hereafter, people will say: ‘...our Lord, we have seen and heard...’ (*as-Sajda*: 12). Thus, sight here precedes hearing because when the Resurrection occurs the human shall be surprised by a horrible sight, so he sees before he hears.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says in describing the people of ‘Ad: ‘...but neither their hearing, nor their sight, nor their hearts were of the least avail to them...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 26). So they heard, but it was as if they did not hear. And

(1) The poet in question was Qays ibn Al-Mulawwih ibn Mazahim Al-‘Amiri. He was a romantic poet from the people of Najd and was nicknamed *Majnun Layla* (Layla’s madman) because of his ardent love for Layla bint Sa’d Al-Akhiliyya. Her father kept her away from him until he was found lying dead among some rocks. He was then taken back to his family, and this was in the year 68 A.H. [*Al-Mawsu‘a Ash-Shi‘riyyah*]

(2) The verse is from a poem on the *tawil* meter, and it consists of two verses, the first of which is: Despite being kept away from her for long, the further I get
The keener are my ears and eyes for her

they saw, but it was as if they did not see. For they did not benefit anything from this, as Allah, *the Exalted and Glorious*, says: 'And We have placed over their hearts coverings, lest they understand it, and in their ears deafness...' (*al-Isra'*: 46). Consequently, their hearts became empty; Allah *Glorified is He* states: '...and their hearts are void.' (*Ibrahim*: 43)

'And surely, We have created many of the jinn and mankind for Hell. They have hearts wherewith they understand not, they have eyes wherewith they see not, and they have ears wherewith they hear not (the truth). They are like cattle, nay even more astray; those! They are the heedless ones' (*al-A'raf*: 179). However, what is the connection between hearing, seeing and the heart, and why has Allah *the Almighty* stated them together? Scholars said: It is because hearing realizes that which is heard, seeing realizes that which is seen, and from these recognitions the human can form thoughts and then present them to the intellect to choose from and compare between their constituents. So, it takes the good and leaves the bad, and takes that which is right and leaves that which is wrong, and takes that which agrees with the Revealed Law and leaves that which contravenes it.

When it settles upon a matter, it gives it to the heart so that it can be instilled therein. Thus, the creed is firmly established and does not budge, and the faith does not waver and does not go back to the intellect to be discussed once again. Therefore, the heart is where one's beliefs are located.

Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Indeed, in the body there is a lump of flesh; if it is sound, the whole body is sound; and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Indeed, it is the heart.'⁽¹⁾ This is because the heart is the vessel that carries the fluid of life and pumps it to all the parts of the body. When it is filled with faith, it pumps this faith, along with the blood, to all the parts of the body, and thus one's conduct and actions come about in accordance with this faith, and every sense carries out its task accurately.

(1) *Agreed upon Hadith... It was narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (50), Muslim in his Sahih (2996), and Ibn Majah in his Sunnan (3974); all of them were based on the Hadith of Nu'man ibn Bashir which starts as follows: 'Verily, the lawful is clear and the unlawful is clear, and between the two of them are doubtful matters about which many people do not know. Thus, he who avoids doubtful matters clears himself in regard to his religion and his honor...'*

In this way you find that the One Who gives you life does not grant you that which obstructs you from Him, or that which hinders you in implementing His Way. For this, you must read: ‘And when they hear ill speech, they withdraw from it and say, ‘To us our deeds, and to you your deeds. Peace be to you. We seek not the ignorant’ (*al-Qasas*: 55).

Allah *Glorified is He* also says: ‘And it has already been revealed to you in the Book (this Quran) that when you hear the Verses of Allah being denied and mocked at, then sit not with them, until they engage in a talk other than that; (but if you stayed with them) certainly in that case you would be like them. Surely, Allah will collect the hypocrites and disbelievers all together in Hell’ (*an-Nisa*: 140).

Therefore, when faith is securely established in the heart of the person nothing issues from it except that which agrees with the requirements of faith, in word and deed, and all his activities in life are stamped with this stamp. As for the people of ‘Ad whom we are discussing, they did not benefit from hearing their Messenger nor from the signs of the universe that they saw around them. They did not taste, therefore, the flavour of faith in Allah *the Almighty*.

The part saying: ‘...seeing that they went on rejecting Allah’s signs...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 26) means that they used to deny them and turn away from them. If they had believed, Allah *the Almighty* would have opened their hearts. But because they chose disbelief and they preferred it, Allah *the Almighty* sealed their hearts, their hearing and their sight. Allah *the Almighty* helped them with what they wanted. This is because He is a Lord Who gives His slave what he wants.

Therefore we advise every woman who excessively grieves over losing someone dear to her: ‘Be wary of this. Leave the realm of grief and do not become accustomed to it. Do not look at what has been taken from you but look at what remains. If you do not, Allah will prolong your grief and take away from you what you already have.’ This is an important lesson, which is that if something bad afflicts something dear to you, do not look at what the affliction has taken away, but rather look at what you still have. This will help alleviate your grief and keep you from falling into anguish and despair. Then you will find that what remains is greater, and that your affliction is less than other people’s afflictions.

This is why when the people came to the Chinese sage and complained to him about the toils and anxieties of life, he said to them: 'Let each one of you write down his worries and troubles on a piece of paper. Then, put your pieces of paper in this box and come back to me after a week.' After a week the complainers came back and he said to the first: 'Put your hand in and take a piece of paper out of the box,' and so he took a piece of paper. When he looked at it he said: 'No, I want my piece of paper.' Why? It is because he found that his calamity was less serious than someone else's calamity. The common people translated this into in the maxim: 'Whoever sees the trials of people feels that his own trial pales in comparison.'

It has been narrated that 'Urwah ibn Az-Zubayr ⁽¹⁾ travelled to see the Umayyad Caliph ⁽²⁾ in Greater Syria. On the way he injured his leg and he could not find anyone to treat it until he reached Damascus. There they found that the wound had festered and there was no solution but to amputate the leg. So, they tried to find an anaesthetic, but he said: 'No. I do not want to be heedless of my Lord for the blink of an eye. Instead, leave me until I have started praying.' When he had entered into prayer, they cut off his leg and he did not feel anything. Then they took it and shrouded it, and he said to them: 'Give it to me.' When he held it in his hands, he said: 'O Allah, if you have afflicted me in one limb, You have protected the rest of my limbs.'⁽³⁾

(1) His name was 'Urwah ibn Az-Zubayr ibn Al-'Awam Al-Qurashi, the jurist scholar (*faqih*) and one of the seven main Jurists of Medina. He was the son of Asma' bint Abu Bakr. He was born in the year 24 A.H. and he died in the year 94 A.H. at the age of 70. [*Al-Wafi bil Wafyat* vol. 6, p. 359]

(2) The Umayyad Caliph that 'Urwah went to see was Al-Walid ibn 'Abd Al-Malik.

(3) He sustained an ulcer in his leg. During the assembly of Al-Walid, they advised him to cut it off; otherwise, his whole body would be affected by gangrene. When they summoned the amputator to cut off his leg, they said: 'Let us make you drink some intoxicant (wine) to stop you from feeling the pain.' He said: 'I would not resort to anything forbidden for the cure I am seeking.' They said: 'Let us give you a soporific.' He said: 'I hate to be deprived of a part of me without feeling the pain of it and so lose the reward of having patience over it.' Some people then came in to him, and he disapprovingly asked: 'Who are they?' They replied: 'To hold you still for pain may drive away patience.' So he said: 'Let me pray.' When he would pray, he would get preoccupied by prayer away from himself.' And so it was amputated while he was praying. [*Al-Wafi bil Wafyat* vol. 6, p. 359].

Indeed, does the person who is absorbed in Allah's Company feel any pain? We must believe in these reports and not deem them to be farfetched because it is from the secrets of the ear that if you completely close your ears (from outside noise), you will not feel pain. If you try and you still feel some pain, know that you have not sealed your ears completely.

The call of '*Allahu Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest [and more important than everything])' is that which takes you away from the work of the life of this world and places you in front of Allah *the Almighty*. It is the Opening *Takbir* (saying: *Allahu Akbar*) with which you disengage yourself from all things to commence the prayer. We explained before that working and engaging in significant pursuits is considered great, but Allah is the Greatest. Thus, let no one deem working in the life of this world and striving and extracting its treasures to be insignificant because the life of this world is too important to be forgotten about. But at the same time it is not important enough to be our final objective.

Whoever traces the story of the people of 'Ad throughout the Noble Quran will find that it is mentioned in several chapters. Here it is mentioned in a general and succinct manner, while the incidents of this story are narrated in detail in the chapter of *Hud*. Also the brief depiction of the punishment that befell them, which is mentioned here, is described in more detail in the chapter of *al-Haqqah*. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And as for 'Ad, they were destroyed by a furious violent wind which Allah imposed on them for seven nights and eight days in succession so that you could see men lying overthrown (destroyed), as if they were hollow trunks of date-palms! Do you see any remnants of them?' (*al-Haqqah*: 6-8)

The wind that destroyed them was a storm wind (*rih sarsar*), that is, a fierce wind with a disturbing sound, coming upon them from above for seven nights and eight days without cessation.

The word *husum* (used to describe the days; translated as succession) is the plural of *hasim*. It derives from the word *hasimah* and this implies that their issue was conclusively settled and that was the end of the matter. There was nothing left of them.

If you were to ask: why did Allah *the Almighty* say: ‘...for seven nights and eight days...’ (*al-Haqqā*: 7), when the norm in legislation is that the night precede the day, and timing starts with the night-time and not the daytime? The proof is that we confirm the beginning of *Ramadan* according to the night (based on moon sighting), so before we start to fast, we start to offer night prayers (*tarawih*).

This is why they made it a juristic conundrum: what is the *sunna* (an act recommended by the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*) that precedes the *fard* (obligatory act)? It appears that the torment descended upon them at dawn, then the day began, and it ended at sunset. This is how it went on for seven nights and eight days in succession.

The orientalist stopped at this verse and objected to how the Noble Quran makes numbers feminine when the counted noun is masculine, and vice versa. ‘...For seven nights and eight days (*sab`a layalin wa-thamaniyata ayyamin*)...’ (*al-Haqqā*: 7).

The rule in Arabic grammar is that the numbers three to nine are the opposite of the counted noun in terms of being masculine or feminine, and there is a rationale behind this. The default position of every word is the masculine, so you say *katib* (writer). As for the feminine, it needs a sign to distinguish it, so they add the letter *ta`* to it, and thus we say *katibah*.

Thus, the feminine is a branch of the masculine, and this is why it needs something to distinguish it. As for the terms used to express numbers three to nine, their default position is to be feminine, so we say: *thalatha* (three), *arba`ah* (four), *khamseh* (five) and so forth.

When a number comes with a masculine counted noun, both words remain in their original form, and with the feminine it needs a sign. So, instead of adding another sign, they chose to remove the sign that indicates the feminine.

This is how the numbers have come to contradict their counted nouns with regards to being masculine and feminine. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...for seven nights and eight days...’ (*al-Haqqā*: 7).

Also, there is the fact that, according to astronomers, a day is calculated from one point in time until the same point in time on the following day. This

is why we find them at one o'clock in the afternoon saying: 'One o'clock in the evening,' even though we are still in the middle of the day. The same goes for one hour after midnight. They say: 'One o'clock in the morning' even though we are still in the middle of the night. As for the day in legislation, it is counted from sunrise to sunset, and the night from sunset to sunrise.

We notice that this chapter has mentioned some scenes from Hud's (Eber's) *peace be upon him* story, but its details are found in the chapter named after him, which is the chapter of *Hud*. It goes into a lot of incidents that are not narrated here.

In the chapter at hand, the context focuses on three scenes or issues which are: the call to worship Allah *the Almighty* alone; warning against worshipping other than Him because by worshipping other than Him, they would expose themselves to punishment; and the fact that he was their brother and was keen on their salvation. Then they responded to him: 'They said, 'Have you come to turn us away from our gods? Then bring us that with which you threaten us, if you are one of the truthful!' (*al-Ahqaf*: 22)

As for the chapter of *Hud*, it adds more scenes in the portrayal of the story as Allah *the Almighty* says there: 'And to 'Ad [We sent] their brother Hud. He said, 'O my people worship Allah; you have no god other than Him...' (*Hud*: 50). This agrees with the verses we have in this chapter. Hud (Eber) *peace be upon him* also said: '...Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a terrible Day,' (*al-Ahqaf*: 21) and he said: '...you are not but inventors [of falsehood]' (*Hud*: 50).

Accordingly, here Hud (Eber) *peace be upon him* talks about the resulting consequences and there he talks about the cause. The cause of the great punishment is that you invented falsehoods about Allah *the Almighty* by ascribing partners to Him.

Then He mentions an additional aspect in the chapter of *Hud* which is His statement: 'O my people I ask of you no reward for it (the Message). My reward is only from Him, Who created me. Will you not then understand?' (*Hud*: 51)

It is as though the issue, when viewed logically, according to the law of trade-offs, would entail that you should pay me for delivering the Message to you. However, I do not want any payment from you as you can never pay me

back. My just reward is great and surpasses your capacity. This is why I only ask it from Allah, the One Who has sent me and assigned me this task.

His statement: '...from Him, Who created me...' (*Hud*: 51) means created me and brought me into existence. He did not say: 'The One Who sent me,' as the intended meaning is that Allah *Glorified is He* created me to be a messenger who is qualified to bear His Call and act as His ambassador to His creation.

Even Hud's (Eber's) *peace be upon him* name agrees with this mission. The word Hud comes from *hada* which means to desist, repent and return to Allah *the Almighty*. An example of this is Allah's saying: '...we have turned back (*hudna*) to You...' (*al-A'raf*: 156), that is, we have repented and turned back to Allah *the Almighty*.

Then, in the chapter of *Hud*, he did command his people to seek forgiveness and repent to Allah *the Almighty*: 'And O my people! Ask forgiveness of your Lord and then repent to Him...' (*Hud*: 52). Seeking forgiveness is for sins that have been committed in the past, while repentance means to be determined not to return to the sin once again in the future. Then, Hud (Eber) *peace be upon him* explained to them the fruits of doing so. 'He (Allah) will send you (from the sky) abundant rain, and add strength to your strength...' (*Hud*: 52). This part has not been mentioned in the chapter of *al-Ahqaf*.

Also, one of the details that is mentioned in the chapter of *Hud* and not here is their statement: 'All that we say is that some of our gods (false deities) have seized you with evil (madness).' He said, 'I call Allah to witness and bear you witness that I am free from that which you ascribe as partners in worship' (*Hud*: 54).

Here we notice that he did not just refute the claim on his own behalf, but rather called Allah *the Almighty* to bear witness for him, and thus absolved himself from this statement. Then he said to them: 'I put my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord! There is not a moving (living) creature, but He has grasp of its forelock. Verily, my Lord is on the Straight Path (the truth)' (*Hud*: 56).

His words demonstrate the confidence that a believer has in his Lord, so he said, challenging them: 'Do whatever you want. I have not come of my own accord and I am not confronting you with my own might, or my own

power or my supporters. Rather, I am confronting you with Allah, Who has sent me and upon Him do I rely in my call.'

Here is an important doctrinal lesson, which is that if a trial befalls you do not despair or become angry, but go back to the balance of faith that you have within yourself. If your own laws are suspended remember that Allah's Laws are never suspended; and if worldly ways and means forsake you, remember that the Causer of all things is there, so return to Him.

In the chapter of *Hud*, Allah *the Almighty* gives us a portrayal of the salvation attained by the believers in Him that is not mentioned here: 'And when Our Commandment came, We saved Hud and those who believed with him by a Mercy from Us, and We saved them from a severe torment' (*Hud*: 58). This was a universal sign that broke all laws. 'And when Our Commandment came...' (*Hud*: 58) to destroy the people of 'Ad with the torment they were hastening to receive, We (Allah) saved Hud (Eber) *peace be upon him* and those who believed along with him. And how were they saved? '...By a Mercy from Us...' (*Hud*: 58). It was only Allah's Mercy that protected them because what happened was an upheaval of nature and an act of wrath against those who sinned against the Creator of this nature. The wind is a tempest; destructive, agitating, and furiously raging. Despite this, it broke all the physical laws of the universe, as it destroyed these people and left other people safe

وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا مَا حَوْلَكُمْ مِنَ الْقُرَىٰ وَصَرَفْنَا آيَاتِنَا لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

**We have also destroyed other communities that once flourished around you – We had given them various signs so that they might return to the right way [27]
(The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 27)**

The address here is for the Quraysh. He wants to turn their attention towards the end of those denying the communities around them: '...what surrounds you of [those] cities...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 27) meaning around Mecca.

Allah *the Almighty* has addressed them in another place: 'And, verily, you pass by them (the remnants of their dwellings) at morning-time and by night. Will you not, then, use your reason?' (*as-Saffat*: 137-138) Indeed, they passed

by the cities of Saleh (Shelah), the people of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon them*, and the wind-curved sand hills of `Ad and Thamud, and they witnessed their remnants and Allah's punishment that befell them.

In another place Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Do they not see how We come to [their] land and shrink its borders? Allah decides— no one can reverse His Decision— and He is swift in reckoning' (*ar-Ra'd*: 41). It means: 'Oh Quraysh, wake up and do not be deluded by the position of leadership you have over the Arabs and the authority you have over the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula, and that you have a place in the hearts of people because the power of faith that is entering the hearts of people will strip you of your leadership from right under your feet.

And here you are, seeing the territory of faith increasing every day and the territory of disbelief retreating, so take a lesson from this. This issue is what caused Khalid ibn Al-Walid, `Amr ibn Al-`As⁽¹⁾ and other chiefs and leader of disbelief to become believers *may Allah be pleased with them*. When they saw Prophet Muhammad's followers increasing they said: 'Muhammad's call has emerged and become established, and he has come to have such power that no one can confront.' They certainly believed in his call.

His statement: '...and We have diversified the signs [or verses]...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 27) means that Allah *the Almighty* showed them all kinds of proofs and in different ways. 'That perhaps they might return [from their evil ways],' (*al-Ahqaf*: 27) that is, turn back from their arrogance, insolence and stubbornness, and turn back from their disbelief and their ingratitude towards Allah's Blessings. This is because these people, after receiving Allah's Bounties and Favours, disbelieved in the Bestower of them and set up partners with Him. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says in the following verse:

(1) Khalid and `Amr became Muslims at the same time. Khalid made up his mind to become a Muslim and he headed towards Medina, and on the way he met `Amr. `Amr said to him: 'Where are you going?' I (Khalid) said: 'What has made you go out?' He said: 'And what has made you go out?' I (Khalid) said: 'I want to embrace Islam and follow Muhammad.' `Amr said: 'This is what has brought me here.' This occurred in the year 7 A.H., i.e. after Badr, Uhud, Al-Khandaq, and several other battles, and before the Conquest of Mecca. `Amr said openly: 'When we left the Khandaq with the confederate clans, I said to my companions: 'I think that Muhammad's matter is rising tremendously.'

فَلَوْلَا نَصْرُهُمُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قُرْبَانًا آلِهَةً بَلْ ضَلُّوا
عَنْهُمْ وَذَلِكَ إِيْفَاقُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَقْتِرُونَ

**So why did their gods not help them, those they set up as
gods besides God to bring them nearer to Him? No
indeed! They failed them utterly: it was all a lie of their
own making [28] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 28)**

The word (*falawla*; why did not) is equivalent to (*halla*); it denotes incitement and admonition. Accordingly, the part saying ‘...why did those (*falawla*) whom they had taken for gods besides Allah, as a way of approach not help them?’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 28) carries an ironic tone regarding these gods that they adopted besides Allah *the Almighty*. It intends to mock them by saying: why have they not helped you and stood by you through your afflictions? ‘...As a way of approach (to Allah)...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 28) means as a way of bringing them closer to Allah *the Almighty*. None of this happened. Why? It is because they are false, claimed deities, and they can neither harm nor benefit.

Rather, these gods are the work of their own hands. They made them themselves. They would stand a rock up and give it arms and legs and a nose and ears, and if it fell, they would pick it up; and if its arm broke, they would fix it. In Allah’s Name, is there any rationality in this?

Their statement ‘...as a way of approach (to Allah)...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 28), is just as they said in another place: ‘...We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allah...’ (*az-Zumar*: 3). Such statements of theirs are astonishing considering that they were a people of eloquence and fluency. They knew very well the meaning of worship. If they had said that they only respect them so as to draw closer to Allah *the Almighty* this would have made sense. But they said: ‘...we worship them...’ (*az-Zumar*: 3). Although you clearly know that worship means to obey the commands and prohibitions of the object of worship. Do these idols have commands and prohibitions?

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* responds to them: ‘...nay, but they vanished completely from them (when there came the torment)...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 28), that is, they strayed and vanished from them (*bal dallu`anhum*). It similar to us saying: ‘So-and-so has lost his way,’ and also Allah’s saying: ‘And when

harm touches you upon the sea, those that you call upon besides Him vanish from you except Him (Allah Alone)...’ (*al-Isra’*: 67). Why? It is because the matter involves destruction.

The human cannot cheat himself, and in times of adversity, he abandons these false gods and he seeks refuge in the True God Who possesses benefit and harm. In this situation, he never says: ‘O Hubal (an idol worshipped in pre-Islamic times)!’ because he knows that Hubal will never save him. Rather, he says: ‘O Allah!’

‘And that (*wadhalika*)...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 28) is a demonstrative pronoun that indicates their taking gods besides Allah *the Almighty*. While the Arabic word (*ifk*) in ‘...was their lie...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 28) stands for deliberate falsehood, which is the worst kind of lying. ‘And their inventions...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 28) refer to their fabrication of lies by claiming that these objects were gods. Thus, it is as if the general meaning is: indeed, the lack of help and support is the result of your self-delusion and false claims regarding Allah *the Almighty* by attributing divinity to other than Him.

وَإِذْ صَرَفْنَا إِلَيْكَ نَفَرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقُرْآنَ فَلَمَّا حَضَرُوهُ قَالُوا أَنصِتُوا
فَلَمَّا قُضِيَ وَلَّوْا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِمْ مُنْذِرِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾ قَالُوا يَنْقُومَنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا كِتَابًا أُنزِلَ
مِّنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَىٰ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ وَإِلَىٰ طَرِيقٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٣٠﴾

**We sent a group of jinn to you [Prophet] to listen to the
Quran. When they heard it, they said to one another,
‘Be quiet!’ Then when it was finished they turned to
their community and gave them warning [29] They said,
‘Our people, we have been listening to a Scripture that
came after Moses, confirming previous scriptures,
giving guidance to the truth and the straight path [30]
(The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 29 - 30)**

The context now takes us to another sphere of the call. After telling us about the situation regarding human beings and how, among them, there were those who believed and others who denied Allah’s Messenger, it tells us about the jinn. With regards to the call, they are the counterparts to human beings.

Since Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to both human beings and the jinn, the jinn are therefore morally responsible and accountable creatures like us. But they are hidden from us, and so we cannot see them. In this regard, the Noble Quran says: ‘...indeed, he sees you, he and his tribe, from where you do not see them...’ (*al-A‘raf*: 27).

The jinn have agility and the ability to penetrate things because of their igneous nature. This is why, if you were to light a fire behind this wall, in a few moments the heat would be felt. Hence, you must believe that they are from fire, that they are able to penetrate things, and that they have a nature unlike that of human beings.

The True Lord wants to make it clear to us that the jinn, even though they are hidden from us, are like us in terms of legal responsibility. Like us they are addressed by the Noble Quran. Among them there are believers and disbelievers, the obedient and the disobedient.

We know the story of the conflict between the jinn and human beings that has existed ever since Adam *peace be upon him* was created and Satan was commanded to prostrate to him and he refused and acted arrogantly. His argument was that he was created from fire and Adam *peace be upon him* was created from clay, so how could he prostrate to him when he was superior to him, as he said: ‘...I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay’ (*al-A‘raf*: 12).

It is true that Adam *peace be upon him* also fell into disobedience, but there is a massive difference between the disobedience of Adam *peace be upon him* and that of Satan. Adam *peace be upon him* disobeyed his Lord when he ate from the tree that his Lord had forbidden him to eat from. He disobeyed his Lord due to heedlessness, and due to being overpowered by his desire and listening to Satan’s whisperings.

Then he realized his disobedience and admitted it. He repented from it and acknowledged that he erred against his Lord and that he had wronged himself: ‘Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers,’ (*al-A‘raf*: 23). And also in the chapter of *al-Baqara*: ‘Then Adam received from his Lord

Words. And his Lord pardoned him (accepted his repentance). Verily, He is the One Who forgives (accepts repentance), the Most Merciful,' (*al-Baqara*: 37).

Therefore, Adam's repentance was accepted because He did not reject Allah's Judgement. As for Satan, he rejected His Judgement and did not submit to it, so he was banished from Allah's Mercy and exiled. There is a difference between disobeying a judgment or a law while acknowledging it and affirming that it comes from Allah, and rejecting it altogether.

This is why we use this speech with whoever argues, for example, about religious issues that have a clear ruling, such as usury or growing a beard. Some people say: 'Dealing in usury is now permissible.' We respond to this by saying: 'With this statement you are rejecting Allah's Ruling regarding usury. It is safer for you to say that it is prohibited, but your circumstances are forcing you to deal in it,' for example.

Then it is for you to decide to follow Adam *peace be upon him* and repent, and seek forgiveness so that perhaps Allah *the Almighty* will forgive you, instead of stubbornly opposing your Lord regarding His Ruling which is something you cannot do. Remember Satan's words: '...and indeed I will order them to change the nature created by Allah...' (*an-Nisa*: 119).

Be wary of this matter, as you know that Satan was once known as the 'Peacock of the Angels.'⁽¹⁾ After he stubbornly opposed Allah's Command, acted proudly and rejected Allah's Judgement, Allah *the Almighty* made him accursed and expelled him from His Mercy.

There is an important point for us to note regarding Allah's Command to Adam *peace be upon him* not to eat from the tree: '...but do not approach this tree...' (*al-Baqara*: 35). The prohibition was only regarding approaching it, and the same goes for every command concerning what Allah *the Almighty* has prohibited: '...These are the limits [set by] Allah, so do not approach them...' (*al-Baqara*: 187).

(1) Narrated by Al-Alusi in his *Tafsir* (vol. 1, no. 272) from Abu Al-'Aliyah regarding the meaning of '...and was one of the disbelievers.' (*al-Baqara*: 34) Furthermore, the outward meaning is that his disbelief was due to his ignorance, since Allah the Exalted took back from him the knowledge that He had lent him and which he had dressed himself in when he was the 'Peacock of the Angels.'

Regarding what Allah *the Almighty* has made permissible for you, He says: ‘...These are the limits of Allah, so do not transgress them...’ (*al-Baqara*: 229). That is, do not overstep what Allah has allowed you. As for the prohibited, do not come near it because whoever grazes his animals near the forbidden pasture of someone else is liable to slip into it at any moment.⁽¹⁾

The progeny of Satan have followed his path in deluding the children of Adam *peace be upon him*. We cannot see them just as we cannot see the angels despite the difference between the two of them, which is that angels are from light, while demons are from fire.

Here the discussion moves, with regards to the message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from human beings to the jinn, informing that the jinn are legally responsible and accountable for their actions and that they can listen to the Noble Quran. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not mention this to us himself, but rather, he related to us what Allah *the Almighty* had informed him concerning the jinn listening to the Noble Quran.

Allah said in the chapter of *al-Jinn*: ‘Say [O Muhammad], ‘It has been revealed to me that a group of the jinn listened (to the Quran) and said: Indeed, we have heard an amazing Quran. It guides to the right course, and we have believed in it.’ (*al-Jinn*: 1-2)

It is as if the True Lord *the Exalted* is saying to His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘I have not sent you to go to the jinn and address them because you cannot see them. Therefore, We led a group of the jinn to you and brought them to your presence so that they can listen to the Noble Quran without you perceiving them. And if I had not told you this, you would not have known it.’

(1) *Agreed upon Hadith... It was narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (50), Muslim in his Sahih (2996), and Ibn Majah in his Sunnan from the Hadith of Nu`man ibn Bashir that he heard the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him saying: ‘Verily, the lawful is clear and the unlawful is clear, and between the two of them are doubtful matters about which many people do not know. Thus, he who avoids doubtful matters clears himself in regard to his religion and his honor. And whoever falls into doubtful matters falls into the unlawful, just like the shepherd who grazes (his flock) around a private pasture almost grazes (his flock) in it. Behold! Every king has a private pasture, and Allah’s Private Pasture is what He has prohibited.’*

Here Allah *the Exalted* says: 'And [mention, O Muhammad], when We directed to you a group of the jinn, listening to the Quran...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 29). You were reciting the Noble Quran and they were around your listening.

There is also their statement in the chapter of *al-Jinn*: 'It guides to the right course...' (*al-Jinn*: 2). And here the jinn said: '...a [recited] Book revealed after Musa (Moses)...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 30), which proves that the jinn have a connection to the previous prophets and that, like us, they are legally responsible and accountable for their actions.

There is also reference to them in the chapter of *ar-Rahman*: 'We (Allah) shall attend to you, Oh you two classes (jinn and mankind)' (*ar-Rahman*: 31). That is, We shall devote Ourselves to calling you to account for your deeds, after leaving you free to do whatever you wanted. Do not think that this was heedlessness on Our Part. Rather, We gave you respite in order to confirm the ability of free choice that We created within you and granted you.

The jinn and human beings, referred to by the Quranic word (*ath-thaqalan*; 'the two classes'), are equal in reckoning just as they are equal in legal responsibility and accountability.

It was narrated that Anas Allah *be pleased with him* said: 'I was with the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* on one of the mountains of Mecca when an old man with a staff, on which he was leaning, approached us. On seeing him, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* recognized him. He said: 'His walk and his structure are like that of the jinn.' The man said: 'Yes, I am one of the jinn.' So, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him: 'Who are you?' He said: 'I am Hamah ibn Him ibn Laqis ibn Iblis.' He then said: 'Between you and your father Iblis there are only two fathers?' He said: 'Yes. Indeed, I have lived to see most of time and the lesser part of it remains, and I witnessed Cain killing Abel.'⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by Fakhr Ad-Din Ar-Razi in his *Tafsir (Mafatih Al-Ghayb)* as part of his explanation of this verse... and it includes: 'At the time Cain killed Abel I was walking among the hills.' It was stated by Al-'Uqayli in *Ad-Du'afa' Al-Kabir* (Hadith no. 1809). Its chain of narration is long, strange and contains untrustworthy transmitters. Al-'Uqayli said: 'Its chain of narrations includes Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah Al-Ansari Abu Salamah, who is untrustworthy in narrating Hadith.'

This narration is proof that they live a long time and that they can take on different forms, just as angels take on different forms. We do not see angels in their real form and we do not see the jinn in their real form, unless they assume the form of a human being.

You know the long Hadith of Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* when he came to the assembly of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the form of a strange man, yet no signs of travel could be seen on him. None of those present recognised him until he sat down close to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and started asking him about *Islam*, *Iman* (belief), and *Ihsan* (excellence) and the Messenger answering him. Then he left; and when the Companions asked about him, the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied: 'Indeed that was Jibril. He came to teach you the matters of your religion.'⁽¹⁾

On this account, we saw some of the enemies of Prophet Muhammad's call trying to stir up obstacles regarding it such as saying that the Messenger should be an angel. This problem has been dealt with. If the Messenger had come as an angel, he would have had to come to people in the form of a man; otherwise, how could he convey the teachings to them and how would they learn from him?

Therefore, the obstacle would remain. Furthermore, an angel cannot be a proper example to be followed because angels do not disobey Allah *the Almighty* in whatever He has commanded them, but always do what they are bidden to do. So, how can an angel be an example for those who, by their very nature, make mistakes, fall into heedlessness, and forget?

Therefore, it is a condition for a Prophet and Messenger to be of the same species as those he is sent to so that he can act as an example for them.

= Ibn Al-Jawzi said in the book *Al-Mawdu'at*: 'This Hadith is fabricated and there is no doubt about it. It has two paths of narration. The first of them contains Ishaq ibn Bishr and he was a liar who fabricated Hadiths. While the other contains Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah Al-Ansari Abu Salamah, who was untrustworthy in narrating Hadith'

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (48) and likewise Muslim in his *Sahih* (9) According to his version, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'That was Jibril. He came to teach the people their religion'; and according to the version of Muslim, he said: 'Indeed that was Jibril; he came to you to teach you your religion.'

The True Lord *the Exalted* has given us a detailed illustration of the state of the jinn, and that among them there is the believer and the disbeliever. He said, quoting them: 'And among us are Muslims [in submission to Allah], and among us are the unjust. And whoever has become Muslim – those have sought out the right course. But as for the unjust, they will be, for Hell, firewood' (*al-Jinn*: 14-15).

Therefore, the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'I read the chapter of *ar-Rahman* to your brothers from among the jinn, and they were more responsive to it than you. Whenever they heard: 'Which, then, of your Lord's favours do you deny?' (*ar-Rahman*: 13), they would all say in one breath: 'Our Lord, we do not deny any of your favours! For you is all praise,'⁽¹⁾ and they would repeat this every time the verse was repeated.

And you can hear them saying: 'And exalted be the Majesty of our Lord...' (*al-Jinn*: 3), that is, sublimely exalted is His Glory, and due to this sublimity: '...He has taken neither a wife, nor a son (or offspring or children).' (*al-Jinn*: 3) Therefore, the jinn have knowledge of the matters of belief and the truth of Allah's Oneness, and maybe they are more accurate than us in expressing them. It suffices that they deemed Satan to be a fool, as they said: 'And that our foolish one has been saying about Allah an excessive transgression' (*al-Jinn*: 4).

We return to Allah's statement that we were discussing: 'And [mention, O Muhammad], when We directed to you a group of the jinn, listening to the Quran...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 29). The Arabic word (*nafar*; group) denotes a company of people consisting of anywhere between three to forty individuals. '...When We directed to you a group of the jinn...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 29), means that We brought them to you instead of you going to them. 'And when they attended it...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 29), that is, they were present for the recitation: '...they said (to one another), 'Listen quietly'...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 29). Listen with interest and

(1) Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi in *Dala'il An-Nabuwwah* (vol. 2, p. 108, Hadith no. 522) on the authority of Jabir ibn 'Abdullah Allah be pleased with him who said: 'When the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him read the chapter of *ar-Rahman* to the jinn, they remained quiet and did not say anything, so the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him said: 'The jinn responded better than you. Whenever I read to them: 'Which, then, of your Lord's favors do you deny?' (*ar-Rahman*: 13), they would say: 'Our Lord, We do not deny a single one of Your Favors!'

contemplation, which indicate that they advised one another to listen in silence. ‘...And when it was concluded...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 29), that is, when the recitation came to an end ‘...they went back to their people as warners’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 29). They went back to their people, warning them and conveying to them what they had heard.

‘They said, ‘O our people, indeed we have heard a [recited] Book revealed after Musa (Moses)...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 30), that is, the Noble Quran, and their statement ‘...after [that of] Musa...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 30) proves that they had a connection to the previous Messengers and that they believed in our master Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*, i.e. they were Jews.

The jinn mentioned Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and not ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* because the Book of Musa presented the doctrine for regulating life’s affairs and actions and it contained laws and rulings. As for the book of ‘Isa, it was merely spiritualities and pieces of advice. This is why they became aware of this matter and they put the Gospel and the Torah in one book despite the partisanship between them, and called it ‘The Holy Bible.’

The meaning of ‘...confirming...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 30) is that the Noble Quran confirms ‘...what was before it...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 30), that is, the divine books that came before it. As long as it affirms them, then it has brought what they brought, but it gives even more as it: ‘...guides to the truth and to a straight path,’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 30), in that it suits the universality and oneness of religion

This is because every Messenger before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to treat the diseases of his own community in a particular time and place. It is possible for two messengers to be contemporary, as we have seen with our masters Ibrahim (Abraham) and Lut (Lot) as well as Musa (Moses) and Shu’aib (Jethro) *peace be upon them all*.

The world at that time was in a state of isolation and solitude, and there was no coming together as there is now, which has made the entire world like a small village. This isolated way of life meant that each community was unaware of other communities.

Consequently, each community had their own social ills and plagues and each needed a messenger to put them right and take his people by the hand

back to Allah *the Almighty*. Thus, there were people who worshipped idols instead of Allah *the Almighty* others who cheated in weights and measures, and still others that deviated sexually from the natural way that Allah *the Almighty* had created. Each one of these groups needed a messenger.

However, when the world came together and means of communication became spread worldwide, it was necessary to have one messenger because the world's ills and the different horizons would be united. There must be one messenger to put things right in every time and place. Therefore, every time and place has been honoured by the one who combined all good qualities, anytime and anywhere, Prophet Muhammad ibn `Abdullah *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Therefore, a group of the jinn heard the message and took the task of conveying it to others. This is why Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him* said: 'May Allah bless the person who hears one of my sayings, contemplates it, and then conveys it to those who did not hear it. Indeed, the person who the message is later conveyed to may be more aware of its meanings than the one who initially heard it.'⁽¹⁾ Indeed, the one who the message is conveyed to may be more eager to implement it than the one who initially heard it. An Arabic poet understood this concept and illustrated it when he said⁽²⁾

'Take my knowledge and do not look at my actions,

Reap the fruits and leave the branch for the fire.'⁽³⁾

Then, this group of jinn continued to convey the message to their people and warned them concerning what they had heard, Allah *Glorified is He* said, reporting the jinn's message to their people:

(1) Narrated by Abu Dawud in his *Sunnan* (3175) and At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (2580, 2581)... He declared the first to be a good (*hasan*) narration and the second (the *Hadith of Ibn Mas'ud*) to be *hasan sahih* (two chains of narrations, one is good and the other is authentic). It was also narrated by Ibn Majah in his *Sunnan* (226, 227, and 228) and he also narrated it from the *Hadith of Anas ibn Malik* (*Hadith* 232).

(2) He is the Sheikh, the jurist, Imam Khalaf ibn Abu Al-Qasim Muhammad Al-Azdi Al-Qayrawani Al-Baradhi'i, and it is also pronounced as Al-Baradi'i. It is not known exactly when he was born or when he died. (*Tahdhib Al-Mudawana* 1/2)

(3) He said this verse about himself to his students, and the meaning is to take knowledge from him and not pay attention to the one carrying it. Thus, you should eat the ripe fruits and let the rods be used as firewood.

يَقُومَنَّ أَجِيبُوا دَاعِيَ اللَّهِ وَآمِنُوا بِهِ يَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُخْرِجَكُم مِّنْ
عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٣١﴾ وَمَن لَّا يُجِبْ دَاعِيَ اللَّهِ فَلَيْسَ بِمُعْجِزٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَيْسَ
لَهُ مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءُ أُولَٰئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٣٢﴾

**Our people, respond to the one who calls you to God.
Believe in Him: He will forgive you your sins and protect
you from a painful torment. [31] Those who fail to respond
to God's call cannot escape God's power anywhere on
earth, nor will they have any protector against Him: such
people have clearly gone far astray [32]
(The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 31-32)**

The words: '...Allah's caller,' (*al-Ahqaf*: 30) are primarily referring to Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him*. Additionally, they are referring to the Prophet's followers who strive to convey his message to their people. 'And have faith in him,' (*al-Ahqaf*: 30) is an order that we should have faith in what he has brought. 'He will forgive you (whatever is past) of your sins, and save you from a grievous suffering (in the life to come)' (*al-Ahqaf*: 31). Allah *Glorified is He* said: '...forgive you (whatever is past) of (*min*) your sins,' (*al-Ahqaf*: 31) and the Arabic word *min* (of) indicates portioning. This means that He forgives some sins, and this forgiveness is a fruit of faith. He did not refer to the forgiveness of all their sins because Allah *Glorified is He* leaves other sins for us to repent and turn to Him. For example, there are sins that are forgiven from one prayer to the next, from one Friday prayer to the next or from one *Ramadan* to the next.⁽¹⁾ However, there are also sins that cannot be erased by repentance alone, as the sinner must fulfil additional conditions for the sins to be forgiven. These include the transgressions against the rights of other creatures, and the injustices in which objects are forcibly taken from others. In such cases, the

(1) Narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (6832) from Abu Hurayra *may Allah be pleased with him* that Prophet Muhammad said: "Each prescribed prayer after a prescribed prayer is expiation for (the sins) between them." And he said: "And one Friday to the next and one month to the next (are also expiations)." This means that in every month of *Ramadan* is forgiveness for the sins that were done since the preceding *Ramadan*.

sinner must return the rights of the other creatures before the sins are forgiven by Allah *Glorified is He*.

Allah *Glorified is He* said: '...and (He will) save you from a grievous suffering (in the life to come)' (*al-Ahqaf*: 31). Since these sins may result in punishment in the Hereafter, it follows that if Allah *Glorified is He* forgives these sins, He will save the sinner from the fire. This is the principle of emptying oneself from sins before filling our work with good deeds as we have previously mentioned.

However, Allah *Glorified is He* did not mention in this verse the entry of these jinn to paradise. This caused some people to ask, 'Do the believing jinn enter paradise?' Some people are of the opinion that they will be transformed into dust after the reckoning, and that will be the end of their matter. The proof these people presented for this argument is that Allah *Glorified is He* did not say that the jinn will enter paradise after being delivered from the fire.

However, we know that the jinn are legally responsible like us, and they include believers and disbelievers. Therefore, the more acceptable opinion is that they are like us, in that they will be rewarded with paradise for their righteous deeds or punished in the fire for their disbelief.

Some people ask, 'How can they be punished with the fire when they were created from it?' This is easy for the Creator to establish, as He has other laws that are beyond our capacity to understand. We previously stated that people are created from mud, but that does not make them dissolve when immersed into water. Allah *Glorified is He* said: '...for, behold, it is a tree that grows in the very heart of the blazing fire (of hell)' (*as-Saffat*: 64). How can a tree grow in the very heart of hell-fire, when the worldly laws of nature state that such a tree will burn instantaneously? Thus, there is another set of divine laws concerning such concepts, and we should not consider these matters impossible, when Allah *Glorified is He* knows His creation better than we do.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* said in the verse we are studying: 'But he who does not respond to Allah's call can never elude (Him) on earth' (*al-Ahqaf*: 32). The Arabic word *mu'jiz* was used here ('elude'), and it is generally used to refer to a person who is incapacitating someone else. Incapacity ('*ajz*') is the state of weakness in which a person cannot perform any actions. So, when a person is a *mu'jiz* to another person, it means that he has rendered him unable

to act. We also say that the Quran is *mu'jiz* which means that the Arabs were incapable of bringing anything like it. In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* said that the person who disobeyed Allah's caller and disbelieved in him will never be *mu'jiz* (eluding) to Him, and they will never escape or flee from Allah's punishment.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* said: '...nor can he have any protector against Him (in the life to come),' (*al-Ahqaf*: 32). This disbeliever will not find any other power that can defend or intercede for them in front of Allah *Glorified is He*. Indeed, no forces will be able to protect him from Allah's chastisement. In the following words, Allah *Glorified is He* described the forces that the disbelievers are naively relying upon: '...all these will be in a clear (*mubeen*) loss' (*al-Ahqaf*: 32). This means that the protectors themselves will abandon them and will themselves be lost on the Day of Judgment, as they had no real power. The word *mubeen* (clear) means that their loss or confusion will encompass them and that they will search for their destination in every direction, just as a wandering person does after losing the right path.

Then, the context of the verses returned to the universal signs that Allah *Glorified is He* created, instructing the disbelievers to contemplate Allah's power. This is because these disbelievers had denied the tools of hearing, sight and discernment that Allah *Glorified is He* had created in them, and they did not benefit from these means of contemplation. Therefore, Allah highlighted these signs repeatedly to them, as a varying form of lesson and example, Allah *Glorified is He* said:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَمْ يَئِىَ بِخَلْقِهِنَّ
يَقْدِرْ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يُحْيِيَ الْمَوْتَىٰ بَلَىٰ إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

Do the disbelievers not understand that God, who created the heavens and earth and did not tire in doing so, has the power to bring the dead back to life? Yes indeed! He has power over everything [33] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 33)

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* has mentioned one of the most overwhelming signs of His creation, which is the creation of the heavens and the earth. Allah

Glorified is He also said in another chapter: 'Greater indeed than the creation of man is the creation of the heavens and the earth' (*Ghafir*: 57). Thus, He mentioned the creation of the heavens and the earth without mentioning the creation of man because they are a greater sign. Each person lives a minute number of years. Even if a person's age reaches a hundred years, this age is minuscule in comparison to the age of the heavens and the earth.

Allah *Glorified is He* said: '...and (He) was never wearied by their creation' (*al-Ahqaf*: 33). This means that Allah *Glorified is He* did not become tired because of this creation, as He said in another verse: '...and (that) no weariness could ever touch Us' (*Qaf*: 38). If someone has these attributes and these are the signs of His creation, is He not fully Capable of bringing the dead back to life? The answer to this question comes as: 'Verily, indeed (*bala*).' Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* is fully Capable of resurrecting the dead, just as He had the power to create everything in the heavens and the earth. The Arabic word *bala* indicated affirmation in this context because the question asked in the verse was a negating question. The basic lexical rule is that negating a negation is actually an affirmation.

The verse is then concluded with the phrase: 'He has power over everything' (*al-Ahqaf*: 33). This conclusion emphasises all of Allah's overwhelming power, and not just the lighter concept of resurrecting the dead. Indeed, His power is capable of every concept, even the transformations that are greater than resurrection, Allah *Glorified is He* said:

وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَلَى النَّارِ أَلَيْسَ هَذَا بِالْحَقِّ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّنَا
 قَالَ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

**On the Day the disbelievers are brought before Hell [it will be said to them], 'Is this not real?' 'Yes, by our Lord,' they will reply and He will say, 'Then taste the punishment for having denied the truth' [34]
 (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 34)**

This is another event that will happen when the disbelievers will see the fire, and we seek refuge in Allah *Glorified is He* from their destiny. Allah

Glorified is He said in a previous verse in the same chapter: ‘And on the Day when those who disbelieved will be brought within sight of the fire, (they will be told, ‘You have exhausted your (share of) good blessings in your worldly life, having enjoyed them (without any thought of the hereafter)’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 20). Thus, He mentioned the reason why they will be punished by the fire, which is that they had exhausted their entire share of good bounties in the life of this world. Therefore, there is nothing left for them to enjoy in the Hereafter.

In that respect, we previously said that an apparent blessing which occupies a servant’s time or keeps his attention away from Allah *Glorified is He* is in fact a trial and a plight. A true blessing is that which reminds you of the One Who bestowed all these blessings and bounties. This is why Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him* taught us to say a particular prayer whenever we see a blessing that we possess or that someone else possesses. He instructed us to say: ‘This is what Allah wills (*Masha’a Allah*). Indeed, there is no power except with Allah (*La quwata illa billah*).’⁽¹⁾

In that Prophetic saying of remembrance, you are attributing the favour to Allah, the One Who created everything and you are freeing yourself from any delusions in attributing the blessing to yourself. You should realize that you do not possess any bounties by virtue of your own skilfulness and cleverness. This was the delusion of the (disbeliever) Qarun when he said: ‘This (wealth) has been given to me only by virtue of the knowledge that is in me!’ (*al-Qasas*: 78) The result of that delusion was that Allah *Glorified is He* punished him, as Allah said: ‘And thereupon We caused the earth to swallow him and his dwelling’ (*al-Qasas*: 81). It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* was saying to him: ‘As long as this wealth was given to you by virtue of the knowledge that is in you, then protect your wealth with your knowledge.’

It has been narrated that ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab *may Allah be pleased with him* came to our Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon*

(1) Narrated by At-Tabarani in his *Mu’jam Al-Kabir* (14275) from ‘Uqba ibn ‘Amir who said that He said: {Whoever has been blessed with a blessing and he wants it to remain, then let him say ‘There is no strength and no power except in God.’} Then The Messenger of Allah read: “And (he continued:) “Alas, if thou hadst but said, on entering thy garden, ‘Whatever Allah wills (shall come to pass, for) there is no power save with God!’ ...” (*al-Kahf*: 39)

him and found him sleeping on a mat that had left marks on his skin. He did not find any objects of material bliss in the Prophet's room. 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* was saddened by the modest state of the Prophet's room, and he was unable to hide his emotion from the Prophet *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him*. He said to Prophet Muhammad, 'O Messenger of Allah! Ask Allah to grant to your community material bounties, just as He has granted to the Persians and the Romans.' The Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him* looked at him and said: 'Are you in doubt, O, son of Al-Khattab? These people (the Persians and Romans) have had their entire share of good bounties hastened for them in the life of this world.'⁽¹⁾

We have mentioned the statement of 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz, 'By Allah, if I had wanted, I could have had better food served to me than any of you, and be better dressed than any of you, but I am storing up my delights for the Hereafter.'⁽²⁾ This is why Allah *Glorified is He* said: '(And all who are thus blest will be told 'Eat and drink with good happiness in return for all (the good deeds) that you have sent ahead in the past (worldly) days!' (*al-Haqqa*: 24)

Therefore, whoever remembers the divine reward, calling to mind the bliss which is prepared in the Hereafter, will find it easy to obey Allah *Glorified is He* in this worldly life. This is like the student who revises for long nights and denies himself the pleasure of rest because he desires a greater pleasure which is the pleasure of success.

Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'And so, on the Day (*yawm*) when those who disbelieved will be brought within sight of the Fire' (*al-Ahqaf*: 34). The word *yawm* (day) on its own is a circumstance of time. Allah was ordering Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him* in this verse to remind the disbelievers of the punishment prepared for them in the Hereafter. Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him* was

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (2288) and also Muslim in his *Sahih* (2707) as part of a long, Hadith from Ibn 'Abbas

(2) This statement was attributed to 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab and not to 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz. It has been mentioned by Al-Qurtubi in his *Tafsir* regarding the verse: "You have exhausted your (share of) good things in your worldly life," (*al-Ahqaf*: 20) and likewise, was mentioned by Ar-Razi in his *Tafsir*, An-Nasafi in his *Tafsir* and As-Suyuti in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*.

ordered to warn them of that day and to ask them: ‘Is this not the truth?’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 34) that you have been denying. On that day, this truth will become a reality in their eyes.

We previously explained that knowledge (and certitude) has three phases. These are the prior knowledge of a certain event before it occurs (*‘ilm-ul-yaqeen*), the sight of that event when it happens in front of our eyes (*‘ayn-ul-yaqeen*) and the immersive experience of that event (*haqq-ul-yaqeen*). Information regarding the Hereafter, including the details of reward or punishment, is part of the knowledge of a certain event that will happen in our next life. When we see these events happening with our eyes, this knowledge will be transformed into a sight of certainty. After that, when we come into direct contact with the reward or the punishment, after the people of paradise enter paradise and the people of the fire enter the fire, the sight will become an experience of certainty.

These phases were mentioned in two chapters in the Noble Quran. The first mention was in Allah’s Verses: ‘You are obsessed by greed for more (bounties), until you go down to your graves. Nay, in time you will come to understand! Then, (and once again) nay, in time you will come to understand! Nay, if you could but understand (it) with an understanding (born) of certainty, you would indeed, most surely, see the blazing fire (of hell)! In the end you will indeed, most surely, behold it with the eye of certainty: and on that Day you will most surely be called to account for (what you did with) the boon of life!’ (*at-Takathur*: 1-8)

As for the truth of certainty, it is mentioned in Allah’s statement: ‘But if one happens to be of those misguided people who deny the truth, a welcome of burning despair (awaits him in the life to come,) and the heat of a blazing fire! Verily, this is indeed the truth of certainty! Extol, then, the limitless glory of your Lord’s mighty name!’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 92-96)

After being asked the question, ‘Is this not the truth?’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 34) on the Day of Judgment, they will answer: ‘Verily (*bala*), by Our Lord (it is the truth)!’ Answering the negating question with the word *bala* is an affirmation because negating a negation is a positive affirmation. Indeed, this is the truth that they were denying.

In fact, they will not just affirm it lightly, but will pledge by Allah's Name that it is the truth, as a result of the severity of the experience. They will say: 'Verily (*bala*), by Our Lord,' (*al-Ahqaf*: 34), after seeing the punishment and coming into direct contact with it. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* will issue the final verdict, as He will say to them: 'Taste, then, this suffering as an outcome of your denial of the truth!' (*al-Ahqaf*: 34) Therefore, this punishment was a direct result of their disbelief, Allah *Glorified is He* said:

فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَأُولُوا الْعَذْرِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ وَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلْ لَهُمْ كَانَتْهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ مَا يُوعَدُونَ لَمْ يَلْبَثُوا إِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنْ نَّهَارٍ بَلَّغَ فَبَلَ يَهْلِكُ إِلَّا الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

Be steadfast [Muhammad], like those messengers of firm resolve. Do not seek to hasten the punishment for the disbelievers: on the Day they see what they had been warned about, it will seem to them that they lingered no more than a single hour of a single day [in this life]. This is a warning. Shall any be destroyed except the defiant? [35] (The Quran, *al-Ahqaf*: 35)

Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him* is the one being addressed in this verse. Allah *Glorified is He* consoled him and affirmed his status so that he can be patient and bear the harm that came from the disbelievers. Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him* was not the first messenger to be harmed in this way, as he was preceded by many messengers who were also harmed. Therefore, this verse was instructing him to be patient, just as his brothers who carried the message before were patient with their disbelieving peoples.

Indeed, Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him* was exposed to a lot of harm from his people. They harmed him in their allegations when they said that he was a sorcerer, a poet, a madman, a soothsayer or a liar. Then they went on to harm him physically, as they harmed him in Ta'if until his feet bled. In the Battle of Uhud, one of his molars was broken, and once, while he was praying, they threw the intestines of a camel on his back.⁽¹⁾

(1) Mentioned by At-Tahawi in *Mushkil Al-Athar* (Hadith 3327) from 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud

In addition to harming him personally, they also harmed him regarding his family and those who believed in him. They persecuted him to such an extent that he was forced to leave Mecca and immigrate to Medina, and they even plotted to kill him. Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him* was patient during all of this harm. However, the harm was still overwhelming, just as it is difficult to any human being.

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to give him an example and a model of patience from the stories of the previous messengers. Allah *Glorified is He* said: ‘Remain, then, (O believer,) patient in adversity, just as all of the apostles who had firm hearts, were patient’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 35). Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was thrown into a fire, but despite that, he did not lose his trust in his Lord. The proof is that when Angel Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* came to him and offered to put out the fire, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) said to him: ‘I do not ask for help from you (but from Allah).’⁽¹⁾ Then, Allah’s Command came from the heavens: ‘O fire! Be thou cool, and (a source of) inner peace for Ibrahim (Abraham)!’ (*al-Anbiya*: 69)

Therefore, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was tested in his youth, and was also tested in his adulthood with the command to slaughter his only son at the time, Prophet Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him*. Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was patient with this test as well, and Allah *Glorified is He* granted him a ram to slaughter instead of his son. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* granted him another son, Ishaq (‘Isaac), and a grandson, Ya’qub (Jacob), and both of them were prophets *peace be upon them*.

These blessings were the result of Prophet Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) submission to Allah’s Commands and his acceptance of the divine fate. Therefore, we should follow this good example of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), the Father of the Prophets, who was always submissive to the divine ruling, and we should raise our younger generations to imitate his way. In addition, we should know that the main way through which hardships can be lifted is being pleased with

(1) Narrated by Ibn Jarir At-Tabari from Mu’tamir ibn Sulayman At-Taymi from some of his companions. He said: {Gabriel came to Abraham and he was certain that he was going to be thrown into the fire, so he said: ‘O Abraham! Do you need anything?’ He said: ‘From you, no.’ (Mentioned by As-Suyuti in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* 5/641)

Allah's decrees. This is because the order is not lifted until the person experiencing it is pleased with Allah's choice in it. Otherwise, it remains afflicting that person until he submits to Allah *Glorified is He*.

If a person is experiencing a prolonged adversity that has been decreed by Allah *Glorified is He* then they should know that the main reason for this prolonged hardship is showing objection towards Allah's judgment. On the other hand, if they were pleased with Allah's ruling, Allah *Glorified is He* would alleviate their hardships.

Take the example of a father who punishes his child for a mistake that the youngster has made. If the child submits and accepts the parental ruling, his father will leave him alone, or will even show compassion, mercy and pleasure towards his child. However, if the child objects to the father's rules, he may extend the punishment until the child learns the intended lesson.

In the most sublime manner, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to raise and nurture His servants by testing them. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* said in the Qudsi Hadith 'If someone is pleased with My destiny I will give to him (blessings) according to My power.'⁽¹⁾

One of the prophets who had great firmness of heart was Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*. He continued to call his people to faith for nine hundred and fifty years. His people used to harm him until he would lose his consciousness and only a small minority of them believed his message.

Look at the tests that Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* endured. In his young age, he was thrown into a well and sold as a slave. In his old age, he was tested by the wife of the nobleman and was thrown into prison. However, he was patient with all of these tests, and therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* established him securely over the authority of Egypt: 'and thus We established Yusuf (Joseph) securely in the land (of Egypt): he had full mastery over it,

(1) Narrated by At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (2320), Ibn Majah in his *Sunnan* (4021) Al-Bayhaqi in *Shu'ab Al-Iman* (9444) and Al-Qada'i in *Musnad Ash-Shihab* (1041) that Anas ibn Malik narrated that Prophet Muhammad said: "Indeed, a remarkable reward comes with a remarkable test, and indeed, when Allah loves a people He tests them... Whoever is pleased will receive Allah's pleasure, and whoever is angry will receive anger."

(doing) whatever he willed. (Thus do) We cause Our grace to alight upon whomever We will' (*Yusuf*: 56).

We also previously explained that our destinies are full of divine wisdom, and that an event is never separated from its doer. So, before objecting to an action, look at the doer of the action. When Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him* reflected on the actions of his brothers from amongst the previous messengers and what they were exposed to, the harm that he was receiving from his own people appeared to be less than the afflictions of the previous nations, and this was a consolation for Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him*.

Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'and do not ask for a quick end of those (who still deny the truth),' (*al-Ahqaf*: 35). Allah *Glorified is He* was instructing Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him* not to ask that their chastisement be hastened, especially as the disbelievers themselves were mockingly asking for a faster chastisement, out of their own ignorance and stubbornness. This is why His Lord addressed Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him* by saying: 'And whether We show you (in this world) something of what We hold in store for those (deniers of the truth), or whether We cause you to die (before that retribution takes place) know that, in the end, it is unto Us that they will be brought back' (*Ghafir*: 77). If you die, Oh Muhammad, before you see Allah *Glorified is He* taking revenge from them, then what We have in store for them will be given to them in the Hereafter.

Allah *Glorified is He* said: '...on the Day when they see (the fulfilment of) what they were promised' (*al-Ahqaf*: 35). That will be the Day of Resurrection. 'It will seem to them) as though they had dwelt (on earth) no longer than one hour of (an earthly) day' (*al-Ahqaf*: 35). Everyone will pass through the stage of the grave, known as the *barzakh* (isthmus), as if it was one hour in a worldly day.

For instance, since Prophet Adam *peace be upon him* died, he did not notice the passage of time, and he will not notice the passage of time until the Last Hour is established. For him, not more than an hour of a day has passed because the perception of time, as we have said, is a result of the events

occurring during that time. If there are no events happening, then there is no perception of time, such as when someone is sleeping, for example.

This is what we saw in the story of the people of the cave. Allah *Glorified is He* put them into a deep sleep and they slept: '...three hundred years and an additional nine years (to that number)' (*al-Ahqaf*: 25). Despite that, when they woke up, they said: 'We have remained thus (asleep) a day, or part of a day' (*al-Kahf*: 19). This is because of the lack of events by which they can tell the time. Therefore, we should not ask for the speedy chastisement of the disbelievers because the chastisement is already only an hour away, however long the time until the Day of Judgment may be.

We have also known of the story of 'Uzair (Ezra), regarding whom Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'Or as he who passed by a town deserted by its people, with its roofs caved in, (and) said, 'How could Allah bring all this back to life after its death?' Thereupon Allah caused him to be dead for a hundred years' (*al-Baqara*: 259).

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* said in the verse we are studying: '(This is our message (*balagh*))' (*al-Ahqaf*: 35). The Arabic word *balagh* (message) literally refers to a person's arrival to their destination. Here, the word refers to the message arriving to its intended audience. Allah *Glorified is He* said in another chapter: 'This is a message (*balagh*) unto all mankind. Hence, let them be warned thereby' (*Ibrahim*: 52). This divine message is the utmost of what people can be warned.

Allah *Glorified is He* used the word: 'This...' (*Ibrahim*: 52). It means that, indeed, Allah's promise will happen and nothing can prevent it because Allah *Glorified is He* is the only Power, and He has no partner or adversary. 'Will, then, any people be (really) destroyed except the iniquitous (*fasiqoon*) folk?' (*al-Ahqaf*: 35) The word *fisq* (iniquity) means the deviation from obedience, and this is the sole reason for destruction in the Hereafter and one of the reasons of destruction in the life of this world.

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