

vol. {27}

REFLECTIONS

**EL SHA'RAWY**  
**الشعر اوان**

فواطـر

المجلد {27}



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the Most Merciful, the  
Dispenser of Mercy.*

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the chapter of

***'Abasa***



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

**T**he chapter of '*Abasa*'<sup>(1)</sup> follows that of *an-Nazi'at*. The harmony in this order lies in that Allah *the Almighty* talks at the end of the chapter of *an-Nazi'at* about the Hour and the people's question of its time. Then, He *Glorified is He* clarifies that its time is unseen – it is only known by Him *Glorified is He*. The mission of Messenger Muhammad is not to tell his people about the time of the Hour; rather, his mission is to warn them against it. At the beginning of the chapter of '*Abasa*', He *the Almighty* mentions the story of Prophet Muhammad's preoccupation with calling the dignitaries of his people to Islam, and neglecting the blind man. It is as if He *the Almighty* says to him, 'Giving warning to those who do not fear the Hour is in vain; you only warn those who fear it.' Now, we have two cases: one who takes heed of the warning given to him/her, and another who neglects it and does not benefit from it. The chapter in question presents an example of both cases.

We should clarify the fact that the Quran is a reminder, a miracle, a Book of admonition and a Way of Guidance. It includes Allah's Instructions to His servants who believed in Him and in Prophet Muhammad who delivered the Message on His Behalf. As a miracle, the Quran is an argument against all people, but the people differ over accepting it. Those who accept its argument accept its Way of Guidance as well. Being sent down from Allah *the Almighty* does not necessarily mean that everyone listening to it will believe in it and take heed of its admonitions and wisdom. As we have previously explained, accepting the Quran depends on the process of the action and the possibility

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(1) '*Abasa*' is the chapter number 80 in the Quranic order. Its verses are 42 and it is unanimously maintained that it was revealed in Mecca. It was revealed after the chapter of *an-Najm* and before that of *al-Qadr*. So, it is number 23 in the order of revelation. See *At-Tabari, Jame' Al-Bayan*, 30/40; and *Al-Baghawi, Ma'alim At-Tanzil*, 4/446.

of being affected by it. One action could produce different effects according to the recipients of the action. He *the Almighty* illustrates this fact in His saying: 'and if We had made it a Quran in a foreign tongue, they would certainly have said: Why have not its communications been made clear? What! a foreign (tongue) and an Arabian! Say: It is to those who believe a guidance and a healing; and (as for) those who do not believe, there is a heaviness in their ears and it is obscure to them...' (*Fussilat*: 44).

The Quran is one, but its effect differs according to the listeners. Those who listened to the Quran from Messenger Muhammad *peace be upon him* and went out, saying: '...what he said just now...' (*Muhammad*: 16) did not pay attention to the greatness of the Quran. Further, they were not affected by its wonderful verses because they did not receive it appropriately. Likewise, He *the Almighty* says: 'You are only sent to warn those who fear it.' (*an-Nazi'at*: 45) This means that the one who does not fear the Hour does not benefit from the warning. This does not signify the corruption of the warner or the warning, for corruption lies in the recipient of the warning. In the chapter of '*Abasa*, Allah *the Almighty* presents the case of those who fear the Hour and those who do not.

The chapter of '*Abasa* is also called *As-Sakhkha* (deafening Blast), which is one of the names of the Hour. This is because it is the only chapter where this terrifying term is mentioned. Other scholars call it the chapter of *al-A'ma* (the blind), who is 'Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum<sup>(1)</sup> about whom some verses were revealed. We have said that the word *Sura* (chapter) is derived from *As-Sur*, which is the wall surrounding and protecting something. It is as if the Quran is a group of gardens including the creedal issues, the principles and the etiquettes. Every chapter of the Quran is a garden. When you explore it, you find that it is independent of the other gardens. Thus, the chapter of '*Abasa* is one of the gardens which has its distinctive features. The first thing

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(1) Ibn Umm Maktum is 'Amr ibn Qays ibn Za'ida ibn Al-Asm. He was a brave, blind Companion who declared his Islam in Mecca and immigrated to Medina after the battle of Badr. He worked as a caller to prayer for Messenger Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* and the latter used to appoint him as his deputy to lead the prayer. He witnessed the battle of Al-Qadisiyya and died a short time before the death of 'Umar in 23 A.H. See Az-Zirikli, *Al-A'lam*, 5/83.



we see in that chapter is the story of 'Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum about whom the first verses were revealed:

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّى ۖ (١) أَنْ جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَى (٢) وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّهٗ يَزَكَّى (٣) أَوْ يَذْكُرُ فَنُفَعَهُ  
الذِّكْرَى (٤) أَمَّا مَنِ اسْتَغْنَى (٥) فَأَنْتَ لَهُ تَصَدَّى (٦) وَمَا عَلَيْكَ أَلَّا يَزَكَّى (٧)  
وَأَمَّا مَنْ جَاءَكَ يَسْعَى (٨) وَهُوَ يَخْشَى (٩) فَأَنْتَ عَنْهُ تَلَهَّى (١٠)

**He frowned and turned away [1] when the blind man came to him — [2] for all you know, he might have grown in spirit [3] or taken note of something useful to him [4] For the self-satisfied one [5] you go out of your way — [6] though you are not to be blamed for his lack of spiritual growth — [7] but from the one who has come to you full of eagerness [8] and awe [9] you allow yourself to be distracted [10]**  
**(The Quran, 'Abasa: 1-10)**

This is a real story that took place during the time the Quran was being revealed. Taking the facts into consideration when the verses of the Quran were revealed has always been a way of strengthening matters of Belief in the hearts of the believers. The Creed and legal rulings were not sent down all at once; rather, these facts, which required a Divine Law and the sending down of revelation to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were taken into account. Sending down a revelation bearing a ruling about an incident that had just happened strengthened the hearts of the believers and linked the rulings with their actual incidents. This is due to the fact that actual realities are always present in the mind because they easily stay in one's memory.

This is one of the reasons why the Quran was revealed gradually, according to incidents and circumstances that happened. It could have been revealed all at once, as the disbelievers wanted, but Allah's answer to them indicates that it was revealed both gradually and all at once. It was revealed all at once from the Preserved Tablet to the lower heaven, and then it descended gradually according to the incidents and the factual realities, to strengthen the heart of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and to offer him solace and alleviate from him the hardships of the Call and the difficulties of the Message.

We have said that if the Quran had been revealed to Prophet Muhammad's heart all at once, it will have strengthened his heart only once. However, it was revealed gradually; whenever a calamity befell him *peace and blessings be upon him* or his Companions, a portion of the Quran used to descend to strengthen and encourage them to keep on the Right Path. Furthermore, it gave them hope of achieving victory and making Allah's Word the uppermost. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'And those who disbelieve say, "Why has the Quran not been revealed to him all at once?" Thus [is it revealed] that We may strengthen your heart by it, and We have rehearsed it [to you] in slow, well-arranged stages [gradually]' (*al-Furqan*: 32). This verse shows that the Quran was not revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* all at once but rather gradually. This enabled the Companions to recite, memorise and practically apply the verses of the Quran (into their daily life). Moreover, this allowed them to reflect on its meaning and understand its rulings and objectives.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And they do not come to you with an argument except that We bring you the Truth and the best explanation' (*al-Furqan*: 33). This verse means that whenever the people differed over a matter or spoke about it, the Quran used to descend with a ruling to be applied concerning it. However, if it had been revealed all at once, it will not have given them the chance to make suggestions or ask about the ruling of a certain matter, as all the rulings will have been revealed. Therefore, the gradual revelation of the Quran provides this kind of usefulness, i.e., being revealed in response to people's questions and realities. The Quran is keen on presenting a kind of revelation that attracts people by making them refer to it when new incidents or issues arise. That is why the sentence, 'They ask you' is repeatedly mentioned in the Quran.

If the Quran had been revealed all at once, there will have been no room for questions. This indicates that those who believed in Allah as their Lord, in Muhammad as a Messenger and in the Quran as a miracle and a Way of Guidance built their new life of faith correctly and in accordance with the teachings and instructions of Islam. This is because they did not wait for the revelation to come down with verses on rulings about what to do; rather, it was they who asked Allah *the Almighty* to send down the rulings that will

govern their lives. This proves their love for Allah's Way of Guidance and the life of faith. They wanted their behaviours to be in conformity with Allah's Will and the will of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

We say that a real story connects people to the ruling sent down about it. Consequently, the ruling remains as long as people remember its story and the reason behind it. The first part of the chapter in question is revealed in reference to a story whose heroes are Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* his Companion, 'Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum, and a group of the chiefs of Quraysh. 'Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum was blind and was one of the relatives of Khadija *Allah be pleased with her*. He was her cousin. He believed in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and came to him to ask about some religious matters, saying, 'O Messenger of Allah, recite the Quran to me and teach me some of what Allah has taught you'. <sup>(1)</sup> This statement shows that he came willingly and lovingly to receive Allah's Way of Guidance; otherwise, he could have kept silent until the revelation came down.

However, when he made this request to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, the Prophet was busy talking to a group of the leaders of the disbelievers in Mecca: Shayba ibn Rabi'a, 'Utba ibn Rabi'a, Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira, 'Umayya ibn Khalaf, Abu Jahl and Al-'Abbas. They were the masters of Quraysh and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wished that they believed. If they believed, this will at least spare the believers from enduring hardships when those people stop their persecution, stubbornness and confrontation with the Islamic Call. If they had believed, most of the people of Mecca will have consequently believed, especially those who feared their power. In this way, the power of the people that used to confront Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will become a power

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(1) It is narrated that Ibn 'Abbas said, 'Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was talking to 'Utba ibn Rabi'a, Abu Jahl ibn Hisham and Al-'Abbas ibn 'Abd Al-Muttalib to whom he frequently used to talk, hoping that they might believe. Meanwhile, a blind man called 'Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. 'Abdullah kept asking him to recite a verse of the Quran, saying, "O Messenger of Allah, teach me some of what Allah has taught you". Prophet Muhammad turned to him and frowned at his face. The Prophet did not like to talk to him [at that time] and turned his attention to the chiefs of Quraysh. Consequently, the verse in question was revealed'. See At-Tabari, *Jame' Al-Bayan*, 43/103.

serving Allah's Religion. This is how Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* considered the matter of calling the chiefs of Quraysh to faith. This was his own endeavour and his vision concerning the interest of the Islamic Call: making Allah's Word uppermost by guiding those people to faith. Attempting to persuade them to believe in Allah, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* proceeded to talk to them. This required much effort and entailed great hardship. That is, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* chose the hard way for the sake of the Call.

As for 'Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum, he was already a believer. This means that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not neglect him because he despised him; rather, he *peace and blessings be upon him* considered priorities and what the situation required. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* always overburdened himself for the sake of the Call. Undoubtedly, talking to Ibn Umm Maktum was easier for him than talking to the leaders of the disbelievers. Therefore, when Allah *the Almighty* reproached Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* such a reproach was not for a shortcoming committed in delivering the Message, but rather for overburdening himself with hardships beyond the requirements of the Message. That is, this reproach was for Prophet Muhammad's interest and not against him *peace and blessings be upon him*. This is how we should understand such a reproach, not according to the limited understanding of some people.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'He [Prophet Muhammad] frowned and turned away when the blind man came to him—but how could you know that he might grow in purity' ('*Abasa*: 1-3) means that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* frowned and grimaced when 'Abdullah came to him. Then he *peace and blessings be upon him* turned his face away from him. Afterwards Allah *the Almighty* said to Prophet Muhammad, 'Muhammad, what will make you perceive that he might grow spiritually because of the knowledge that you will give to him?! This knowledge will cause his faith to increase'.

As such, it is clear that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* left the easy task and preferred the harder matter to the easier one. The Quran makes use of this incident to affirm a religious principle, that is, the task of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was confined only to

conveying the Message on behalf of Allah *the Almighty*. This fact is crystal clear in His saying: '[O Prophet Muhammad] warn them: your only task is to remind' (*al-Ghashiya*: 21), and: '...your duty is only to deliver the clear Message' (*an-Nahl*: 82). These verses show that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* should not wear himself out or overburden himself beyond his capacity or beyond the requirements of the Divine Way of Guidance.

In fact, the key to understanding the reproach in this story is the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Though you are not to be blamed if he does not grow in purity' ('*Abasa*': 7). We notice that the Quranic expression: 'He [Prophet Muhammad] frowned and turned away' ('*Abasa*': 1) is a courteous way of addressing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. His Lord does not address him saying, 'You have frowned and turned away', using the second person; rather, Allah *the Almighty* addresses him *peace and blessings be upon him* in the third person. In other words, Allah *Glorified is He* does not confront Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by using the second person. This makes us understand that the chapter under discussion presents an example of Prophet Muhammad's devotion to the Call. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* directs our attention to Prophet Muhammad's zealousness in conveying Allah's Religion and how he preferred the hard way to the easy one, a fact which is clear in Allah's saying: 'As for the one who regards himself self-sufficient, you [Prophet Muhammad] go out of your way for him' ('*Abasa*': 6-7). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave all his attention to calling the ones who regarded themselves self-sufficient and who thought they were not in need of the Call. Calling those leaders of the disbelievers of Quraysh actually needed more effort and resulted in much resistance on their part. Thus, we must reflect on how courteous Allah's Address to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was.

The chapter in question mentions the incident, Prophet Muhammad's reaction and the Divine Rule concerning that reaction. Furthermore, it clarifies the principle of how one should call to Islam and the reasons for prescribing that way. After this, it turns our attention to man, who is the recipient of the Divine Way of Guidance and the Islamic Call. Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'May man be slain! How ungrateful he is!' ('*Abasa*': 17-18) Calling for man to be

slain indicates that his evil actually went beyond the limits. Allah *the Almighty* wonders about man's ungratefulness after being given the blessings that should have resulted in him having Belief. However, he was ungrateful with regard to the blessings and disbelieved in the Giver of these blessings.

Next, the chapter in question goes on to mention the origin of man and how Allah *Glorified is He* created him out of nothing, bestowed His Blessings on him when he was in need, and facilitated the ways needed to sustain his life. After this, it clarifies that the one who does not believe in Allah *the Almighty* – Who is the One Who created him and bestowed His Blessings on him – out of love, will believe in Him out of fear of the Deafening Blast that will strike the ears with its calamities, warning the heedless people; but when it is too late. This is followed by Allah *the Almighty* telling us the outcome of this, saying: 'On that Day some faces will be beaming, laughing and rejoicing. But some faces will be dust-stained and covered in darkness' ('*Abasa*: 38-41). From this sequence in the chapter in question, a real, meaningful story is related; whenever we mention it, we remember the rulings related to it.

Back to the verses in question, the word '...frowned...' ('*Abasa*: 1) is synonymous with the word 'grimaced'. 'Frown' is an instinctive, spontaneous movement that the mind has no control over. For example, when you say, 'If so-and-so comes, I will frown at him', you cannot actually make this movement properly, which is why it will appear as an affectation. That is, frowning is a spontaneous movement that only happens when the situation requires it. This movement cannot be made deliberately; rather, the person finds that he is forced to make it, instinctively. In other words, it is a reaction to feelings, not an affectation.

As for the verb: '...turned away...' ('*Abasa*: 1), it indicates a deliberate movement. Clearly, the 'frowning' was forced on Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; it was an instinctive movement. The cause of this movement is that he *peace and blessings be upon him* was preoccupied, in his opinion, with more important matters. On the contrary, the verb: '...turned away...' ('*Abasa*: 1) indicates that the action was done deliberately.

Let us ponder over the Quranic description of blindness, which is hated by people and hurts the blind. Despite this, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'When the

blind man came to him [Prophet Muhammad]' (*'Abasa*: 2). The Quranic context is keen on mentioning this description of Ibn Umm Maktum in order to tell us that all the circumstances required that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* should pay attention to him and not turn away from him. Allah *the Almighty* explains Ibn Umm Maktum's situation later, saying: 'But as for the one who has come to you striving earnestly and with fear [in his heart], from him you allow yourself to be distracted' (*'Abasa*: 8-10).

We should reflect on the accuracy of the Quranic style in portraying the events: the blind man is full of eagerness and fear. But what does he fear? The word 'fear' here enriches the meaning because it is general as we are not told what he fears. The fact that the blind man was walking fast indicates his love for Allah's Way of Guidance. He wanted to increase his knowledge as the more knowledgeable the person has, the more his behaviour becomes disciplined according to Allah's Way of Guidance. This means that such a blind man wanted to regulate his behaviour according to the Divine Way of Guidance. This is despite the fact that he was blind, feeling his way, and had an excuse not to search for answers. Indicating this state, Allah does not use an object with the verb '*yakhsha*' (to fear) because this omission gives a richer meaning and is a richer style. This illustrates how we can understand extra details from the Quran and how it contains abundant meanings. When we read the word: 'fear' (*'Abasa*: 10), we think about various meanings: he fears he will fall into a hole while walking quickly, and he will collide into something or meet with the leader of Quraysh, his enemies who persecuted the believers and tortured them. Above all, he holds Allah *the Almighty* in fear.

It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is saying to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'All the matters required that you should pay attention to that believing blind man, who did not need great effort or cause you any hardship. So, how could you turn away from him and pay attention to the tiring, stubborn disbelievers?! How could you be keen on talking to them?! How could you prefer the hard way to the easy way?' Undoubtedly, Prophet Muhammad's action stems from his zealousness and devotion to Allah's Religion; that is why his Lord frequently says to him *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'You may kill yourself with grief, sorrowing after them, if they do not believe in this Message' (*al-Kahf*: 6).

It is as if the verses were revealed to modify Prophet Muhammad's attitude so that he *peace and blessings be upon him* will stand in a position of honour while calling others to the religion; he should neither deceive anyone nor overburden himself with hardships, for Islam will be victorious with or without the leaders of Quraysh. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* should welcome those who willingly embrace Islam and pay no attention to those who turn away from it. If the matter of loss and gain is considered, the disbelievers are the ones who are the losers because they deprive themselves of abundant good by turning away from Allah's Religion.

With regards to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'From him you allow yourself to be distracted (*talahha*)' ('*Abasa*: 8-10), the Arabic word '*lahw*' (distraction), from which the word '*talahha*' (be distracted) comes, carries a significant meaning. There is a difference between '*al-lahw*' (distraction) and '*al-la'ib*' (playing). The latter means to preoccupy yourself with something which is not needed; you do it for no particular reason. However, it does not turn your attention from something required from you. As for 'distraction', it means to preoccupy yourself with something that is not needed and which distracts you from what is required from you. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is saying to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Your endeavour to guide the disbelieving leaders of Quraysh is useless and in vain. It distracts you from what is useful, that is, preoccupying yourself with calling those who will accept your Call'.

If we explore the history of these disbelieving leaders, we find that all of them died in a state of disbelief, except for Al-'Abbas, Prophet Muhammad's uncle. In this regard, we know that he was one of those who used to defend Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and one of the supporters of his Call. If we think carefully about his behaviour, we can conclude that he was a Muslim who concealed his Islam to protect Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from the disbelievers' plots. In fact, as they respected the position of Abu Taleb and Al-'Abbas, the disbelievers did not dare attack Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

In order to prove this point, we should refer to the second pledge of allegiance of Al-'Aqaba in which the *Ansar* pledged to protect Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he immigrated to Medina.



Al-'Abbas said to them, 'You know that Muhammad is under the protection and the honour of his family. We have protected him from those who share with us the same opinion about him. So, he is under the honour of his people and the protection of his country. However, he insisted on joining you and immigrating to your country. Consequently, if you see that you can keep your pledge to Muhammad concerning what you agreed with him, and that you will protect him from his adversaries, it is as you wish and you bear the consequences. However, if you see that you will give him up and let him down after he immigrates to you, leave him now'. The *Ansar* said, 'We listen to what you have said. O Muhammad, Messenger of Allah, speak and set whatever conditions you want for yourself and your Lord'. The statement of Al-'Abbas can never be made by a disbeliever; he wanted to ensure that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will be fully protected and his Call supported. It is thus crystal clear that his behaviour was that of a faithful Muslim.

The story of the chapter of 'Abasa, is that the heavenly revelation was sent down to correct our understanding of some earthly principles. It came down with these verses to tell us: 'Do not rely too much on the people's chiefs, dignitaries and prestigious figures. Those people cannot endure the hardship of changing the status quo and establishing the principles and the values in the society. This is the mission of the ordinary people who form the broader foundation of the society'. When the Islamic Religion was sent down, only the poor and the oppressed people undertook the mission of supporting it. As for the oppressors, the Divine Way of Guidance wanted to eliminate their arrogance and tyranny. As a result, they neither bore the burden of supporting the Call, nor were they expected to bear it. The Divine Way of Guidance neither respected nor honoured them. This is because it is a disciplined Way that depends on the efforts and the sacrifices of those who love Islam and whose hearts are secure in Belief. Islam does not achieve victory except by such people who sacrifice their souls and properties for its sake, however poor or weak they may be. After a short time, those disbelieving leaders of Quraysh were killed by those weak and poor Muslims as well as by the young Muslim boys who formed the new generation of faithful believers. Moreover, if Islam had been taken up by the chiefs and the dignitaries, some people may

have said, 'Islam became victorious because it received the support of the powerful and rich'.

This is a recurrent Divine Law in all the heavenly Messages: the Calls were established by the efforts of the weak and poor, a fact which is clear in the story of Prophet Nuh (Noah): '...and we do not see any have followed you but those who are the meanest of us and of immature judgment...' (*Hud*: 27). This fact refutes the claim of those who say that Islam was spread by force and the sword. How could this be the case?! The history of Islam shows that the early Muslims were weak, poor or slaves.

The greatness of the Islamic Call lies in that it began in Mecca, which was—at that time—a country of disbelief and the home of the powerful disbelieving people and masters whom the Muslims could have never confronted alone, let alone pull the rug (of power) from under their feet. Furthermore, the greatness of Islam is clearly manifested in the fact that it did not actually achieve victory in Mecca—it was just declared and announced therein to these chiefs, oppressors and powerful people that there is no god but Allah. However, it was not supported by such people; rather, it achieved true victory in a remote place, Medina. We have previously explained this matter, saying, 'The Quran affirms the fact that believing in Prophet Muhammad is how followers, protectors and loyal people were gathered. As for the tribal loyalty, it was useless to him concerning calling others to Allah'. In fact, tribal loyalty always stood against his Call. Thus, Islam achieved victory by the efforts of the weak.

If we considered the sword, we will find that it was in the hands of the enemies of the Call. Afterwards, when the Muslims grew stronger, they carried it to make Allah's Word uppermost and to establish the principles of Islam. Islam was not spread by the sword. This is due to the fact that it is a religion that has to be embraced willingly by the heart and cannot be forced on anyone. Thus, Islam spread through good examples and excellent patterns. It came to offer the people values and principles that reform their affairs. This is why many of them hastily and eagerly embraced it. Before engaging in calling others to Islam, Muslims had already convinced other people of Islam by upholding moral principles and conduct that were expressed by their actions before their sayings. These Muslims became an example that was imitated in the

whole world. Consequently, the people embraced Allah's Religion in crowds because of the good examples, not the sword.

The Quran states here that the heavenly Law is different from the earthly one. The earthly as well as the heavenly law require the callers to try to attract the powerful people. However, the point of difference lies in the kind of power that both laws call for. The earthly law asks the people to attract the materialistically powerful people, while the heavenly law wants to attract those who have the power of faith. If the latter power is sound and pursues the right way, it excels the material power.

Now, let us reflect on the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'But how do you know? Perhaps he will have been purified (*yazzakka*), or be reminded, and this reminder will have benefitted him' ('*Abasa*: 3-4). The Arabic verb '*yazzakka*' (to be purified) means to be purified of filth and impurities, be they material or spiritual. This indicates that 'Abdullah had some impurities from which he wanted to purify himself, given the fact that he and the believers were new Muslims at that time; they had just left their state of disbelief in the pre-Islamic era. Moreover, there were many kinds of impurities that they could not overcome even after embracing Allah's Religion. With regards to such people, a simple reminder is enough to take them back to the Right Way.

In this connection, we have come to know that even among the idol worshippers, there were some people who felt repulsive about this idol worship, considering it unnatural and inappropriate. Some of them even travelled through different lands searching for the correct religion. Clearly, the seeds of goodness exist in the human being because of the natural disposition that Allah *the Almighty* has placed in His slaves. We see that the people who witnessed the pre-Islamic era and adopted Islam were of two kinds: some of them knew the impurity of the pre-Islamic era and sought to be purified from it, and another group also knew these impurities but needed a reminder to take them back to the Right Path.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'As for the one who regards himself self-sufficient (*istaghna*)' ('*Abasa*: 5), it refers to those who do not live by Allah's Way of Guidance and wrongly think that their prestigious positions, mastery, high rank and power are enough for them. The Arabic word '*istaghna*' (self-sufficient) entails the existence of people who regard

themselves self-sufficient, who are the disbelieving leaders of Quraysh; the '*mustaghna 'anhu*' (the thing that they thought they were not in need of) was Allah's Way of Guidance; and '*mustaghna bihi*' (the thing on which they depended) was their mastery, position and prestigious rank that made them feel self-sufficient.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'You go out of your way (*tasadda*) for him' ('*Abasa*: 6), the Arabic word '*tasadda*' means to pay great attention to someone or something, just like the thirsty person eagerly goes to water. This indicates eagerness and keenness on doing that action. The word '*tasadda*' is mentioned in the example, '*Dari sadda dar fulan* (My house is opposite so-and-so's house'. This word can also refer to confronting and resisting the enemy. Therefore, there are various meanings understood from this Quranic word as it is Allah *the Almighty* Who revealed it. That is, He *Glorified is He* gives abundant meanings using only a few words.

It is clear that the chapter in question established the principle that served Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his Call. This principle states that reliance concerning the affairs of the Call should not be on the chiefs, the rich people and the possessors of material power; rather it should be on those who possess the characteristics of commitment to that Call, however oppressed they may be. As a matter of fact, the chiefs and the dignitaries are always those harmed most by the reformative Calls because those Calls eliminate their mastery, undermine their haughtiness, and equate them with the common folk. Furthermore, Islam does not benefit from people's Belief in it; in fact, it is they who benefit by such a Belief, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'They think that they have done a favour to you by becoming Muslims. Say, "Do not count your Islam as a favour to me: rather Allah has conferred a favour on you by guiding you to the faith, if you are truthful"' (*al-Hujurat*: 17).

The Lord, *the Most High*, then says:

كَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذِكْرَةٌ ۝ (١١) فَمَنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرْهُ، ۝ (١٢) فِي صُحُفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ ۝ (١٣)  
مَرْفُوعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍ ۝ (١٤) بِأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ ۝ (١٥) كِرَامٍ بَرَرَةٍ ۝ (١٦)

**No indeed! This [Quran] is a lesson [11]  
from which those who wish to be taught should learn [12]  
[written] on honoured [13] exalted, pure pages [14]  
by the hands of [15] noble and virtuous scribes [16]  
(The Quran, 'Abasa: 11-16)**

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'No indeed!' ('Abasa: 11) signifies the end of the aforementioned story, or it is employed to notify Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he should not repeat his attitude towards the blind man.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...This is a lesson' ('Abasa: 11) turns our attention to the essence and the main source of the Divine Way of Guidance and the Islamic Call, namely the Quran. The demonstrative pronoun 'this' could refer to Prophet Muhammad's Call—the Way of Guidance that he came with—or the Quran. It is a lesson and a reminder for the heedless person who forgets his origin and the natural disposition that Allah *the Almighty* has placed inside him. This natural disposition, upon which the Lord *the Most High* has created people, is represented in the original covenant that He *Glorified is He* took from the people in 'a'lam azhzharr' (the time when all mankind was still in the back of Adam). In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them testify concerning their own souls, "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes! We do testify". Lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, "Surely we were heedless of this". Or you should say, "Our fathers before us associated others (with Allah), and we were their descendants after them..."' (*al-A'raf*: 172-173).

Thus, this covenant is broken either through forgetfulness or by imitating the traditions by which the person is surrounded. Undoubtedly, forgetfulness happens first, producing a generation that forgets the natural disposition and diverts from it until it reaches the stage of polytheism. Then a new generation

comes and imitates these in their polytheism. Afterwards, the new Way of Guidance comes to eliminate people's forgetfulness and the blind imitation of their predecessors, taking them back to the Right Path. Next the Lord *the Almighty* says: 'Therefore let those, who will, remember it' ('*Abasa*: 12). The one who wishes to be taught the lesson should learn the Quran, act upon it and memorize its verses. If a verse refers to the Way of Guidance, then learning the lesson entails following that Divine Guidance.

After that, the context in these verses of the Quran directs our attention to the characteristics of the Quran, which is a mighty Book and a reminder for us. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* describes it, saying: '[Written] on honoured, exalted, pure pages. [Written] by the hands of scribes, noble and virtuous' ('*Abasa*: 13-16). These verses mean that we must feel reassured and put our full confidence in the Quran, the Book that contains the Way of Guidance for our lives. This is due to the fact that it is a mighty Book; falsehood will never come to it from before it or from behind it: it is a revelation from the All-Wise, the Praised One. This Book is described as being '[Written] on honoured, exalted, pure pages' ('*Abasa*: 13-14). It is written on honoured pages because it was sent down from the heaven after being copied from the Preserved Tablet. Its pages are exalted in position and elevated in rank. They are also pure pages that no impure person will touch, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'None touch it except the purified' (*al-Waqi'a*: 79).

With regards to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '[Written] by the hands of scribes, noble and virtuous' ('*Abasa*: 15-16), it refers to the angels who wrote down the Quran or copied it from the Preserved Tablet. They transmitted the Quran from Allah *Glorified is He* to the people. Moreover, they are described as noble and virtuous because they are obedient by nature and cannot commit any sin, a fact which is clear in Allah's saying: '...honoured slaves' (*al-Anbiya*: 26), and: '...They do not disobey Allah in what He commands, and do as they are commanded' (*at-Tahrim*: 6).

We should reflect on the factors provided to protect the Quran: it is honoured in itself, exalted in position and in rank; purified, no one except the purified ones will touch it, and honoured because virtuous Angels are in charge of it. These descriptions make us feel totally reassured about the

Way of Guidance and put our full trust in it. This is due to the fact that all the factors needed to preserve the Quran were provided, unlike the other heavenly Books.

The problem with the Books that were revealed before the Quran, that is the Torah and the Gospel, is that they suffered alteration, change and distortion. This is due to the fact that Allah *the Almighty* charged the people of these Books with their preservation, but they failed to fulfil this mission. The first crime committed by those people against their Books is that they forgot part of it. Those who did not forget it concealed some of it, and those who did not conceal it distorted and altered it with their tongues while reciting it. Such distortion was not enough for them, for they added fabrications to their Books, saying that these fabrications were revealed from Allah *the Almighty*. By contrast, the Lord *Glorified is He* Himself undertook to protect the Quran, and did not charge anyone with this mission. This fact is clear in His saying: 'Surely, We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely guard it [from corruption]' (*al-Hijr*: 9).

If the Quran was: '[Written] by the hands of scribes, noble and virtuous' (*'Abasa*: 15-16) from among the angels in the heaven, it has the same position on earth. That is to say that it is served by a group of people who love it, give it all what they have, are entrusted with it, transmit it honestly, scrutinize the correctness of its copies and write beneficial books for the sake of serving it. This is manifested in the accuracy of its recitation, style, exegeses, and explanation of its rulings and the printing of its copies. Many people are honoured by serving the Quran, and even some non-Muslims have played a role in serving it. All these facts are reasons why one should feel reassured about it and put his trust in it as his Way of Guidance that regulates life and reforms both the worldly life and the Hereafter alike. That is why the verses subsequently state that there is no excuse for disbelieving in that Book or turning away from the Way of Guidance, saying:

قُلْ الْإِنْسَنُ مَا أَكْفَرُهُ، (١٧) مِنْ أَيِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ، (١٨) مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ خَلَقَهُ، فَقَدَرُهُ، (١٩)  
ثُمَّ السَّبِيلَ يَسِّرُهُ، (٢٠) ثُمَّ أَمَانَهُ، فَأَقْبَرَهُ، (٢١) ثُمَّ إِذَا شَاءَ أُنْشِرُهُ، (٢٢)

**Woe to man! How ungrateful he is! [17] From what thing  
does God create him? [18] He creates him from a droplet,  
He proportions him [19] He makes the way easy for him [20]  
then He causes him to die and be buried [21] When He wills,  
He will raise him up again [22] (The Quran, 'Abasa: 17 - 22)**

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'May man be slain...' ('Abasa: 17) constitutes a supplication against the disbelievers. The context here is about the disbeliever who disbelieved in Allah *the Almighty* despite all the clear reasons that call one to have faith in the Lord, *Glorified is He*. Therefore, His saying: 'May man be slain...' ('Abasa: 17) means that 'a curse or a punishment (will be given) to the disbeliever'. With regards to His saying: '...How ungrateful he is!' ('Abasa: 17), the Arabic particle '*ma*' (how) carries the meaning of a condemnatory interrogation and being amazed about man's ungratefulness and disbelief.

In this regard, it is narrated that the daughter of Abu Al-Aswad Ad-Du'ali<sup>(1)</sup> once looked to the sky and saw the stars twinkling. And that is why she said, '*Ma ahsana as-sama'u* (What makes the sky beautiful)?' Her father replied, 'It is the stars'. She said, 'My father, I did not mean to pose a question; I was just wondering about the beauty of the sky'. He said, 'Then say, "*Ma ahsana as-sama'a* (How beautiful the sky is!)"'.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...How ungrateful he is!' ('Abasa: 17) carries the meaning of wonderment and amazement because it entails that something contrary to reason and logic had happened. In actuality, all people, depending on sound logic and reason, should become believers. And that is

(1) He is Mazhlum ibn 'Amr ibn Sufyan Ad-Du'ali. He was born one year before the *Hijra* and died in 69 A.H. He is the founding father of the science of *Al-Nahw* (Arabic grammar) and was considered one of the jurists, the dignitaries, the emirs, the poets, the horsemen, and the Tabi'un (Followers). He was known for giving quick answers. He settled in *Al-Basra* during the caliphate of 'Umar and was its emir during the reign of 'Ali. He was the first one to add the 'dots' to the words in the copies of the Quran. See Az-Zirikli, *Al-A'lam*, 3/236.



why it is astonishing that one disbelieves after seeing Allah's signs and Verses. That is why Allah *the Almighty* addresses such people in the chapter of *al-Baqara*, saying: 'How do you deny Allah, [seeing that] you were dead and He gave you life? Again He will cause you to die and again bring you to life; then you shall be brought back to Him' (*al-Baqara*: 28).

Thus, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...How ungrateful he is!' ('*Abasa*: 17) indicates that their disbelief is a strange matter because the argument for it is baseless. Even if we considered this Divine Saying as an interrogation, then it carries the meaning of condemnation. Let us reflect on the precision of the Quranic style in His saying: 'May man be slain!' ('*Abasa*: 17) The Arabic verb '*qutila*' (be slain) is in the passive voice and its subject is not defined. Definitely, there is a difference between slaying and death; the latter is a natural end of life, for all of us will die, but not all of us will be slain. It is as if He *the Almighty* is saying, 'This disbelieving man deserves to be slain because his crime should be punished by death'. One of the severest supplications is to invoke Allah *the Almighty* to cause someone to die; so what about the one supplicated against to be slain?!

The word '...man...' ('*Abasa*: 17), which refers to all human beings, provides the reason for Allah's saying: 'May man be slain!' ('*Abasa*: 17) This is because the Quran frequently describes man as committing evil or having bad qualities, as in Allah's saying: 'Surely man is created with a restless, impatient temperament' (*al-Ma'arij*: 19), and: 'I swear by time, most surely man is in loss' (*al-'Asr*: 1-2) as well as: 'And man prays for evil as he ought to pray for good, and man is ever hasty' (*an-Nahl*: 11), and: 'Certainly, We have created man in [a life of] trial and distress' (*al-Balad*: 4). No one is saved from this evil except those whom Allah *the Almighty* has exempted. The meaning of the verses is that the normal human being, who is not protected by the Divine Way of Guidance, inevitably has a hasty temperament and is in loss. The exception is however mentioned in His saying: 'Surely man is created with a restless, impatient temperament. Being greatly grieved when evil afflicts him and niggardly when good befalls him. Except those who pray' (*al-Ma'arij*: 19-22), and: 'I swear by time, most surely man is in loss. Except those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other [to follow] the truth, and enjoin on each other [to be] patient' (*al-'Asr*: 1-3).

These verses indicate that the natural constitution of the human being is only different from animals because he has been honoured with the mind. However, he will be lower in rank than the animals if he does not use that mind, which Allah *the Almighty* has given him, appropriately or if he gives full rein to his desires and lusts without being deterred by a religion or a Way of Guidance. Thus, His saying: 'May man be slain!' ('*Abasa*: 17) refers to the disbeliever who became one of the wrongdoers by accepting the bestowals from Allah due to His Lordship and leaving the consequences of Allah's Divinity. As he accepted this low position for himself, he deserved to be supplicated against with this invocation of being slain.

Next, the verses remind this disbelieving man about the origin of his creation, saying: 'From what thing did He (Allah) create him? From a sperm-drop He created him, then proportioned him' ('*Abasa*: 18-19). The 'drop' here refers to the semen that carries the sperm, which, in turn, produces man. This sperm-drop is trivial and valueless, but the haughty, arrogant man was created from it. If he carefully reflects on his origin, he will never behave arrogantly. Allah's Powers miraculously turns this underrated fluid to a great, symmetrical creature. As for His saying: '...then proportioned him' ('*Abasa*, 19), it means that Allah *the Almighty* proportioned the creation of man precisely and perfectly. The precision and perfectness in the creation are manifested in the tiny things that the eye cannot perceive and also the enormous bodies that cannot be encompassed by the naked eye—as they say, 'From the atom to the galaxy'.

Thus, '*an-nutfa*' (a sperm-drop) refers to the sperm that lives in the semen. It is so small and subtle that half of the tailor's thimble can contain enough sperms to create all the people living in the world. From this tiny microbe, the human being, who is a marvelous, symmetrical and beautiful creation, comes into existence. Here, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'From a sperm-drop He created him, then proportioned him' ('*Abasa*: 18-19). The Lord *Glorified is He* proportioned man's characteristics, shape, colour, desires, emotions and every organ and atom in his body. He *Glorified is He* Who wonderfully created man from this underrated sperm, also marvelously perfected the creation of the enormous bodies including the heavens, the earth, the stars, the orbits and the galaxies with all their great, abundant creatures. That is why Allah *the Almighty*

says: 'Certainly the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of the men, but most people do not know' (*Ghafir*: 57).

Out of Allah's Favour on us, He *Glorified is He* tells us about the origin of our creation. The Lord *the Almighty* poses the question and answers it Himself, saying: 'From what thing did He (Allah) create him? From a sperm-drop He created him, then proportioned him' (*'Abasa*: 18-19). If He *the Almighty* had not told us about the fact that man is created from a sperm-drop, we might not have known the origin of our creation. This is because the sexual intercourse that produces the sperm-drop is itself a lustful act; it is produced naturally and man might not pay attention to what it forms.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'He makes the way easy for him' (*'Abasa*: 20). This is another blessing that Allah *Glorified is He* bestowed on the human being after the blessing of creating him out of nothing. After creating man from a sperm-drop, Allah *the Almighty* did not leave him without a purpose; rather, He *the Almighty* created him out of nothing and provided him for him to be able to meet his needs. Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* facilitated his way to live in the worldly life due to His bestowals and the necessary elements of life that the Lord, the Ever-Watchful, has provided him with. Clearly, we cannot do without His Bestowals and without Him watching over us. In the chapter of *al-Waqi'a*, Allah *the Almighty* tells us first about the matter of creation, saying: 'We have created you, why do you not then admit the Truth? Have you considered the seed?' (*al-Waqi'a*: 57-58) After that, He *the Almighty* shows His Favour on us as He provides us with the essential elements of life that ensure man's sustenance, saying: 'Have you considered what you sow?' (*al-Waqi'a*: 63), as well as: 'Have you considered the water which you drink?' (*al-Waqi'a*: 68), and: 'Have you considered the fire which you ignite?' (*al-Waqi'a*: 71) These three elements, i.e. the plants, water and fire, are essential to man's life and sustenance.

We have previously discussed the different meanings that are illustrated in these verses of the chapter of *al-Waqi'a*, but here we should direct our attention to Allah's saying: 'Have you considered the fire which you ignite?' (*al-Waqi'a*: 71) in which Allah *the Almighty* does not mention what eliminates the fire. By contrast, He *the Almighty* mentions what eliminates the plants, saying: 'If We pleased, We could have certainly made it broken down into

pieces...' (*al-Waqi'a*: 71), and the water, saying: 'If We pleased, We could have made it salty...' (*al-Waqi'a*: 70). But Allah *the Almighty* does not say about the fire, 'If We please, We could have made it cool'. Rather, He *Glorified is He* left it without being corrupted by anything to remind us about the fire in the Hereafter.

If we ponder on the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'He makes the way easy for him' (*'Abasa*: 20), we find that He *the Almighty* does not say, 'He makes his way easy for him'. There is a great difference between the two expressions. Using the undefined word 'way' denotes generality; the good and evil ways are sub-categorized under it. Thus, the human being can take either the way of goodness or the way of evil. Allah *Glorified is He* has given him a mind to distinguish between matters and choose the best choice. For example, the tongue that pronounces 'there is no god but Allah' can also say, 'There is no god'. That is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Carry on doing good deeds. Everyone will find it easy to do such deeds (as will lead him to his destined place) for which he has been created'.<sup>(1)</sup> After making the way easy for man, there is no excuse for his violation of Allah's Way of Guidance, for Allah *the Almighty* made the good way (as He uses a definite article on the noun 'way') easy for him, but he opted for the evil way.

If Allah *the Almighty* had said, 'He makes his way easy for him', everyone will have had his own way. So, if he were to do evil, he will say, 'This is my way that Allah has made easy for me'. Thus, doing all kinds of deeds is made easy for us; we have the privilege to choose whatever we want from them, and we have the absolute freedom to do or not do them. One should not say, 'This one is forced to do good and that one is forced to do evil', for all of us can freely do both of them, and can opt for one of them. Even one single person can be obedient by doing a good deed or disobedient by doing an evil

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated by At-Tayalisi and Al-Bayhaqi on the authority of 'Umrān ibn Husayn Allah be pleased with him. Its essential meaning is narrated by Al-Bukhari, Muslim, At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Maja on the authority of 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb Allah be pleased with him. See At-Tayalisi, Musnad, Hadith no. 881; Al-Bayhaqi, Al-'Itiqad, 1/146 and Al-Qada' Wa Al-Qadr, 1/124; Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 4949; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2647; At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2136; and Ibn Majah, Sunnan, Hadith no. 78.*

one. We invoke Allah *the Almighty* to make us among the good people who love goodness and do good deeds.

Moreover, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'He makes the way easy for him' ('Abasa: 20) tells us that He *Glorified is He* appointed man as His vicegerent in the earth to establish His Way of Guidance and to worship Him as He ought to be worshipped. Allah *the Almighty* made this easy for man and gave him the ability to do it by granting him the faculties and the necessary abilities to be able to undertake the religious obligations. Thus, if Allah *Glorified is He* charges you with something, you should know that it is within your capacity and power, a fact which is clear in His saying: 'Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty [which is] beyond its ability...' (*al-Baqara*: 286).

So, one should not say that this religious obligation is within my capacity but that one is beyond it; rather, he should consider what Allah *the Almighty* has imposed on him. If Allah *Glorified is He* has charged you with a duty, you should know that it is within your capacity, as He *the Almighty* says: 'Does He not know Who created? And He is the Knower of the subtleties, the Aware' (*al-Mulk*: 14). Therefore, one should not consider his ideas of his capacity the standard for accepting religious obligations. Rather, he should first accept the religious obligations and then proceed to apply them in order to be closer to Allah *the Almighty* the One Who knows best our capacities and powers. If one loses some of his faculties and abilities, the religious obligations carried out by him are waived from him, as he becomes unable to do them.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'Then He causes him to die and be buried' ('Abasa: 21). When we ponder over the linguistic root of the word 'death', we find something amazing that no other word shares. The verb 'to die' can be a transitive or intransitive, and the recipient of this action can be its subject or object, despite the fact that the subject of the verb cannot be its object. That is, we can say concerning this verb, 'So-and-so died', or 'Allah caused so-and-so to die'.

Death means the separation of the spirit from the body; it is also called '*al-wafa*' (taking the soul), as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Allah takes (*yatawaffa*) the souls at the time of their death...' (*az-Zumar*: 42). The word 'spirit' or the word 'body', when alone, is not synonymous with the word 'soul', as the soul is formed from both the spirit and the body. When Allah *the Almighty* wants to

destruct the human structure, He *Glorified is He* separates the spirit from the body. After this separation, death takes place.

Taking the spirit is attributed at times to Allah *the Almighty* as in His saying: 'Allah takes the souls at the time of their death...' (*az-Zumar*: 42); other times to the angel charged with taking the spirits, as He *the Almighty* says: 'Say, "The Angel of death who is given charge of you shall cause you to die..."' (*as-Sajda*: 11); and a third time to the angels who are the soldiers of the Angel of Death: '...Our Messengers cause him to die...' (*al-An'am*: 6). The action is attributed to Allah *the Almighty* because the command is, first and foremost, issued from Him: to the Angel of Death who is the recipient of the command and who, in turn, gives it to the angels charged with this mission. Thus, there is a role played by anyone to whom this action is attributed.

We know that the subject is the doer of the action or the one described by it. When we say, 'So-and-so died', did he cause himself to die? Or is it Allah *the Almighty* Who caused him to die? As long as the person is described by the action of death, it is linguistically correct to call him 'a subject'. However, he, in reality, is not the subject, Allah is. By contrast, if the word 'suicide' is used and a person commits suicide, then the person is the subject because he killed himself. Similarly, we can say, 'So-and-so killed so-and-so', which is a third possibility. Thus, we find that ending one's life can be done through three means: death, killing or suicide. Death is the natural end of life which happens without any human intervention. As for suicide, it means that one hastens to end his life by killing himself. In fact, this is the prescribed time of his death, but he wanted to hastily end his life, and, consequently, fell into one of the prohibited matters that Allah *the Almighty* has forbidden. This is also the case when someone kills another; he killed him at the appointed time of his death, but the murderer wanted to hasten the victim's demise.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Then He causes him to die and be buried' (*'Abasa*: 21) is mentioned in the context of showing Allah's favours on the people, which include: 'From what thing does Allah create him? He creates him from a sperm-drop, He proportions him, He makes the way easy for him' (*'Abasa*: 18-20). These favours also include: 'Then He causes him to die and be buried' (*'Abasa*: 21). Yet, the question to be asked here is, 'Are death and burial blessings?!' Yes, of course, because death deters the human

being from sinning as it reverts him to his original state. The human being who was created from an underrated, impure sperm-drop may behave haughtily, arrogantly and tyrannically, considering himself invincible. He may also be self-deceived, thinking that his power is an intrinsic, lasting one. So, death eliminates all his delusions. It is as if Allah, the Creator, is saying to him, 'I have created you and given you this power by which you acted haughtily against my slaves. However, you will not go beyond My Control, for you will die at the appointed time that I have set for your death. After that, you will return to Me in the Hereafter as you will not be able to circumvent My Punishment, either in the worldly life or in the Hereafter'.

As a matter of fact, bestowing blessings can be fulfilled either through giving or depriving. Allah *the Almighty* purposefully mentions the two kinds in the verses under discussion. It is as if He *the Almighty* is saying to man, 'It is Me Who has given you all these blessings. So, if you do not believe in and worship Me out of desiring My Reward or out of love to be close to Me, you should worship Me out of awe for Me'.

Furthermore, one of Allah's Blessings on His slaves is that He *Glorified is He* prescribed the law of burying the dead people in the graves. With regard to His saying: 'Then He causes him to die and be buried' ('Abasa: 21), the burial means to put the deceased person inside the grave and to cover his body with dust as a way of honouring him through this burial in the ground, as this is a suitable place for him. That is why we say, 'Burying the deceased person is a way of honouring him'. If he were not buried, he will be like the rest of the animals which are left dead on the ground until their corpses decay and rot, or are eaten by the dogs and beasts.

You should reflect on the precision of the Quranic style in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Then He [Allah] causes him to die and be buried' ('Abasa: 21). The verb '*aqbarah*' (to cause someone to be buried) is used instead of the verb '*qabarah*' (to bury) because the one who undertakes the action of burying the dead is the human being, for it is a responsibility due on him. As for Allah *the Almighty* He causes the person to die and shows the people how to bury him. That is, it is Allah *the Almighty* Who causes someone to die and commands the people to bury him.

It is well known that the matter of burial is discussed in the chapter of *al-Ma'ida* in the story of the two sons of Adam. One of them killed the other, and when he saw his body motionless, not speaking or responding to him, he did not know what to do—given that it was the first murder in the history of man. Meanwhile, Allah *the Almighty* sent him what taught him the law of burial. In this regard, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Then Allah sent a crow digging up the earth so that he might show him how he should cover the naked dead corpse (*saw'a*) of his brother...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 31). The Arabic word ‘*saw'a*’ (naked dead corpse) linguistically refers to the private parts; however, it refers to the whole body after its demise. We should notice that the human being was taught by a bird; this means the high genus can learn from the low one.

Before leaving this story, we should reflect on the dialogue between Qabil (Cain) and Habil (Abel) when they made two offerings to Allah: one offering was accepted and the other was rejected. Cain said: ‘I will most certainly slay you...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 27), but his brother replied: ‘...Allah only accepts from those who guard (against evil). If you will stretch forth your hand towards me to slay me, I am not one to stretch forth my hand towards you to slay you. Surely I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds. Surely, I wish [to warn you] that you will bear the sin<sup>(1)</sup> committed by me [if I fight you] and your own sin, and so you will be one of the inmates of the fire. For this is the recompense of the unjust’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 27-29).

In these verses, we notice the determination of the killer, represented in his saying: ‘I will most certainly slay you...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 27). His statement contains many different types of stresses, signifying his determination and how he wanted to rush to kill his brother. Despite that, his brother does not confront him with any physical action to defend himself. This could be regarded as a negative attitude. We expected that the verses will teach us how

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(1) ‘Bearing the sin’ means to be forcefully burdened by the crime that he cannot avert. Ibn ‘Abbas, Al-Hasan, Qatada and Ibn Mas‘ud opined that it means to be burdened with the sin of killing him and what sin he committed before the killing. See Al-Farahidi, *Al-A‘yn*, 8/413; and Al-Wahidi, *At-Tafsir Al-Basit*, 7/338.



to defend ourselves against any offence. However, they teach us how to defend ourselves through dialogue, reason, trying to soften the heart of the offender and reminding him about the supreme Power that should be taken into account. This is the required positive attitude, not active physical effort. That is why the offended one says to his offending brother: 'If you will stretch forth your hand towards me to slay me, I am not one to stretch forth my hand towards you to slay you...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 28). He was trying to soften the heart of his brother, to convince him to renounce violence and follow another way to settle the matter. Then, he says to him: '...I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds' (*al-Ma'ida*: 28). He is reminding him about Allah *the Almighty* and His Supreme Power. If the offended one fears Allah *the Almighty* the offender should fear Him more. Next, he reminds him about the consequences and the recompense, saying, 'You and I have a Lord to Whom we will be returned and in front of whom we will be fairly held accountable. Therefore, do not be one of the wrongdoers who will be punished by the hellfire. My fear of this awful fate prevents me from confronting you in the same way, trying to kill you as you are trying to kill me. Moreover: "...I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds"' (*al-Ma'ida*: 28).

Back to the verse under discussion; Allah *Glorified is He* then says: 'When He wills, He will raise him up again' ('*Abasa*: 28). This verse means that Allah *the Almighty* will resurrect man after he was buried in the dust. Thus, burial in the grave is not the last destination or the last connection of man to existence. He will return to have another life in the Hereafter. We note here that Allah *the Almighty* does not mention His Will in the previous verses. However, He *Glorified is He* mentions it here, saying: 'When He wills, He will raise him up again' ('*Abasa*: 28). The Will here is not related to the human beings but rather to the time that Allah *the Almighty* has appointed for the Hour in order for it to remain a hidden, unseen secret, known only to Him *the Almighty*.

The Lord *the Almighty* then says:

كَلَّا لَمَّا يَقِضْ مَا أَمَرُهُ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ إِلَى طَعَامِهِ ﴿٢٤﴾ أَنَا صَبَبْنَا الْمَاءَ صَبًّا ﴿٢٥﴾  
 ثُمَّ شَقَقْنَا الْأَرْضَ شَقًّا ﴿٢٦﴾ فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا حَبًّا ﴿٢٧﴾ وَعَيْنًا وَقَضْبًا ﴿٢٨﴾ وَزَيْتُونًا وَنَخْلًا ﴿٢٩﴾  
 وَحَدَائِقَ غُلْبًا ﴿٣٠﴾ وَفَكَهْنَةً وَأَبًّا ﴿٣١﴾ مَنَّاعًا لَكُمْ وَلَئِنَّمَكُمُ ﴿٣٢﴾

**Yet man does not fulfil God's commands [23] Let man consider  
 the food he eats! [24] We pour down abundant water [25]  
 and cause the soil to split open [26] We make grain grow [27]  
 and vines, fresh vegetation, [28] olive trees, date palms [29]  
 luscious gardens [30] fruits, and fodder [31] all for you and  
 your livestock to enjoy [32] (The Quran, 'Abasa: 23 - 32)**

The Arabic particle '*kalla*' at the very beginning of these verses indicates rebuke and determent. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* says to the disbelieving man, 'Stop your disbelief in Allah Who has granted you all the blessings you enjoy. You should not have disbelieved in your Lord after you had been introduced to faith through persuasion and also intimidation'.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...man has not fulfilled Allah's Commands [yet]' ('*Abasa*: 23), it means that man inevitably has shortcomings in fulfilling his Lord and Creator's Rights and in doing the required good deeds. This is a rebuke for the one who did not believe in his Lord; he neither considered His Graces, Blessings and convincing arguments, nor did he regard His Severe Torment and Might. Thus, he did not believe in Him *the Almighty* neither out of hope nor out of fear.

Out of Allah's Mercy towards mankind, the Quranic style of negation here employs the particle '*lamma*' and not '*lam*' because the latter negates the past and the present, including the time the statement itself is uttered. As for '*lamma*', it denotes the possibility of the occurrence of action in the future. That is, out of His Kindness towards human beings, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...man has not fulfilled Allah's Commands [yet]' ('*Abasa*: 23). This verse means that man, up to the moment of this rebuke, did not fulfil Allah's Commands, but he is expected to fulfil them in the future. This style does not block the way before man; rather, it leaves the door open so that he makes amends, obviates his shortcomings and reforms his affairs. Up to now, he still

did not fulfil Allah's Command, but in the future, he will fulfil it. This is the meaning of His saying: '...man has not fulfilled Allah's Commands [yet]' ('Abasa: 23). For example, we can say, 'Our garden has not (*lamma*) yielded fruit yet, even though the other gardens have already yielded fruit'. This means that the garden will bear fruit in the future.

The verses have told us about the origin of the man and some of Allah's Blessings on him, including creating him from nothing and providing him with sustenance to meet his needs. Despite that, he did not believe in his Lord *the Almighty* due to hope or fear. After mentioning the origin of human life, Allah *the Almighty* mentions the essential elements for the sustenance of that life, saying: 'Let man consider the food he eats!' ('Abasa: 24)

The Lord *the Most High* wants to attract man's attention to the source of his energy and sustenance of life and to his Lord's Power and Ever-Watchfulness. Allah *Glorified is He* is in charge of providing him in all the stages of his existence. Allah *the Almighty* gave him life and then provided him with what ensures the sustenance of his life. Afterwards, the Lord *the Almighty* clarifies to man how his food comes to him and the stages that this food takes until it reaches him, saying: 'We pour down abundant water' ('Abasa: 25). The verb 'pour down' indicates the abundance of water that falls down from the sky when the Lord *the Almighty* drives that abundant water towards us, with force. That is why the verb 'pour down' is mentioned in particular here. The water in His saying: 'We pour down abundant water' ('Abasa: 25) could refer to that water which is found on the surface of the earth and the evaporation of which causes the fall of rain.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'And cause the soil to split open' ('Abasa: 26). 'To split open the soil' is one of Allah's signs as it prepares the growth of the shoot and allows it to emerge into the air. If we carefully examine the shoot, we find it is a leaf or a tiny bud, but it splits open the hard surface of the soil to emerge from it. We may also see that the tiny leaf has some dust on it that it carries upwards. This phenomenon takes place due to Allah's Omnipotence, Ever-Watchfulness over His creatures and some of His Power which He endowed in this seed. Besides, cleaving the soil is necessary for it to become fertile and to prepare it for agriculture. For this reason, the farmer ploughs the

land, may be many times in some cases. Why is this? This is because ploughing turns over the soil and makes the air penetrate into the outer layers, making it soft and exposing it to sun rays. All these factors help in the process of fertilizing the soil and help the shoot to emerge from the earth, making the plants stronger. The agricultural soil should be neither too muddy that it does not let the plants spread properly, nor too sandy causing the water to drain fast through it. As a matter of fact, ploughing and cleaving the soil make it reach this optimal state.

After the fall of the water and the splitting of the earth by the Power of their Creator, the role of the plants comes: 'We make grain grow' (*'Abasa: 27*). Planting the earth is a process of creation in which Allah *the Almighty* creates the plants from the grains. This process is full of signs and mysteries. The grain consists of two cotyledons and when it is put in water, it grows in size and splits into two halves. Afterwards, a part of it goes downwards to form the root while the bud goes upwards to form the stalk. The grain remains the source of nourishment for those two parts until the stalk gets stronger and becomes able to take in its nourishment from the elements of the soil. Next, the two cotyledons develop to become the first two leaves in the stalk. In every part of the process of germination, there is a manifestation of Allah's Divine Wisdom, Omnipotence, Regulation, Omniscience and Mercy.

He *the Almighty* starts the growth of the plants from the grain to indicate its importance, given the fact that it constitutes the main source of man's nourishment. It is the essential component of his food, and anything else is considered an additional luxury. After this, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Vines, fresh vegetation, olive trees, date palms, luscious gardens, fruits and fodder' (*'Abasa: 28-31*). The grain, which is the origin from which the plant comes, includes wheat, rice, corn, beans, lentil, and kidney beans and so on. In the order of importance, grape comes next because it can serve as an essential food, like wheat, and it is a fruit.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...fresh vegetation' (*'Abasa: 28*) refers to the moist plants that the human being can eat, like radish, rocket and parsley, etc. With regards to: 'Olive trees, date palms' (*'Abasa: 29*), the olive is a rich source of oil and fatty substances while the date palms are rich in

sugary substances. In this way, Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, has provided man with all the elements necessary for his nourishment through the agricultural lands that produce plants with Allah's Power. As for His saying: 'Luscious gardens (*ghulba*)' ('*Abasa*: 30), it refers to the gardens which are filled with giant, tall trees. The Arabic word '*ghulba*' implies the vastness of these gardens. Thus, the essential elements of life are not confined to food and drink, for the sustenance of life also requires woods because 'wood' is used in many industries that are necessary for human life. And finally with regards to His saying: 'Fruits and fodder' ('*Abasa*: 31), the fruit is the tasty and sweet food while the fodder refers to the grassy field where cattle pasture. Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'All for you and your livestock to enjoy' ('*Abasa*: 32). The human beings themselves enjoy the aforementioned blessings. Even what the cattle eat is ultimately an enjoyment for man, as he eats the cattle.

There is a story with Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* behind the word '*abb*' (fodder). He held a prominent position concerning his understanding of the Book of Allah and knowing its different meanings. Despite that, when he was asked about the meaning of Allah's saying: 'Fruits and fodder ('*abba*)' ('*Abasa*: 31), he said, 'How could the earth carry me and the heaven cover me if I gave an opinion about the Book of Allah without knowledge?'<sup>(1)</sup> It is as if he did not know the meaning of the word '*abb*' (fodder), so he showed objectivity and scientific credibility by not uttering anything he did not know. Eventhough he was Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* he did not disdain to say, 'I do not know'. Likewise, when 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* was asked about the meaning of the word '*abb*', he did not answer. Then he shook the staff he was holding, saying, 'O 'Umar, you have delved into an unnecessary matter. What problem can happen if you do not know the meaning of the word '*abb*'?'<sup>(2)</sup> This is how those prominent figures taught us scientific credibility by not speaking about Allah's Religion without knowledge. They also gave us a lesson in being humble with regards to knowledge because arrogance incites the person to lie or to speak about Allah's Religion without knowledge in order to hide his ignorance. By contrast, despite the high rank

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(1) See *Al-Khazin, Lubab At-Ta'wil*, 1/6, 4/396.

(2) See *Al-Baghawi, Ma'alim At-Tanzil*, 5/212.

of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, they did not disdain to say, 'We do not know'. That is why scholars say, 'The one who says, "I do not know", has actually given the answer'. Why is this case? This is because this answer directs the questioner to another source from which to ask and learn. But if he is given a wrong answer, the answerer bears the responsibility of the wrong that the questioner commits because the latter thinks that the answer is correct. In this way, the truth is lost and ideas become confused. Furthermore, what is wrong if Abu Bakr and 'Umar said that they did not know the meaning of the word 'abb'? After all, it is a word mentioned in the context of Allah showing His Favours on His slaves. This means it is one of His Blessings, even if we do not know its exact essence. Do we know all the different kinds of plants?! Moreover, does one's benefit from something depend on knowing its name or what it is like?! In fact, not knowing the name of a certain plant does not prevent us from making use of it.

After discussing the creation of man, his origin, the essential elements of life and some of Allah's Blessings on him, the verses turn our attention to the Hereafter.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الصَّاعَةُ ۚ يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ ۚ وَأُمُّهُ وَأَبِيهِ ۚ  
وَصَحْبِهِ وَبَنِيهِ ۚ لِكُلِّ أَمْرٍ مِنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُغْنِيهِ ۚ

**When the Deafening Blast comes [33] the Day man will  
flee from his own brother [34] his mother, his father [35]  
his wife, his children [36] each of them will be absorbed  
in concerns of their own on that Day [37]  
(The Quran, 'Abasa: 33 - 37)**

The Deafening Blast is one of the names of the Day of Judgment. The Arabic word '*as-sakhkha*' (Deafening Blast) refers to the disturbing sound that strikes the ears, like the rock that breaks the head and causes blood to flow. It is as if the people were deaf in their worldly life, but the Deafening Blast comes to force them to hear. After this, no one can be heedless of it or preoccupied with something else. No ear can be protected from hearing that

sound. Some people used to hear the call to prayer, but they did not answer it out of heedlessness or laziness. Now, they will forcibly hear the deafening, disturbing Blast that will make them feel anxious. The word '*as-sakhkha*' itself is disturbing and frightening. Some scholars say that this disturbing sound is the event that will turn the whole world upside down.

On that Day: '...man will flee from his own brother' ('*Abasa*: 34). This is because he is preoccupied with himself, wanting to be saved from the calamities he sees. There is no longer any room for emotions, brotherhood, loyalty, love and sacrifice. On that Day, everyone will be selfish, caring only about himself and being the first of his brothers to flee from each other.

But we should ponder over this order in the Quran: 'His mother, his father, his wife, his children: Each of them will be absorbed in concerns of their own on that Day' ('*Abasa*: 35-37). One may ask, 'Does Allah *the Almighty* order them in decreasing or increasing order with regard to importance?' Scholars say that the order is both decreasing and increasing. That is, starting with the one who had the most rights, which the person tended not to fulfil in this life, or starting with the ones who the person used to help less, ending with the ones the person used to help more, in this life but cannot help in the next life.

The word 'brother' here indicates generality, including your physical brother or the one you consider your brother, but he is not your physical one. In fact, everyone has a brother of either kind in the worldly life. As for the father, one may live in the worldly life without a father, as one's father may die while he is still in his mother's womb. Likewise, the mother may die while giving birth to him and, consequently, he does not see her. Similarly, man may die without having a wife or children. As for brotherhood, it is necessary for anyone in the worldly life. In the light of these considerations, we can understand the order of the relatives in the verses under discussion. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'The Day man will flee from his own brother' ('*Abasa*: 34) because the brotherhood relationship is the most common one; it is the most inevitable relationship for all of us.

Then He *the Almighty* mentions: 'His mother' ('*Abasa*: 34) because she is the direct cause of one's existence. She also should be mentioned first due to

her rank and role in educating the children. Furthermore, her efforts in educating and raising the children are required during their young childhood, and that is why the young boys and girls do not realise her role or even pay heed to it. On the contrary, they see the father's role, which starts when they become older, greater than the mother's because his role is more prominent at that time. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered us three times to treat our mother well, saying, 'Your mother, again your mother, again your mother, and then your father'.<sup>(1)</sup> In the same connection, when the Quran commands us to treat the parents well, it mentions the reason why the mother should be treated well, but it does not mention that of the father. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years...' (*Luqman*: 14). That is, Allah *the Almighty* reminds us about the role of the mother which the children did not realize, and left the role of the father because it is well-known to them and, therefore, there is no need to remind them about it. That is why the verse in question mentions the mother first, saying: 'His mother, his father' (*'Abasa*: 35). Then the verses mention the wife before the children, saying: 'His wife, his children' (*'Abasa*: 35-37). This is because the wife comes before the children, as she is the cause of their existence.

We may ask why the people flee from each other. There are many reasons, but the verse mentions the most important one, saying: 'Each of them will be absorbed in concerns of their own on that Day' (*'Abasa*: 37). Everyone is concerned about himself because the people are now being taken to account, which is an adequate reason for one to be preoccupied and not care about anyone else. Everyone will be astonished and searching for a way to be saved from this difficult situation. So his concerns are enough for him; he cannot

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(1) Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him narrated that a person came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'O Allah's Messenger, who among the people is most deserving of fine treatment from my hand?' He replied, 'Your mother'. He said, 'Then who (is the next one)?' Prophet Muhammad said, 'Again it is your mother (who deserves the best treatment from you)'. The man said, 'Then who (is the next one)?' He (the Prophet) said, 'Again, it is your mother'. He (then) said, 'Then who?' Thereupon Prophet Muhammad said, 'Then it is your father'. See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 5971; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2548*.



care about anyone else. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* briefly portrayed this situation when he said to 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her*: 'The people will be gathered on the Day of Resurrection bare-foot, naked and uncircumcised, just as they were created'. Being amazed, she said, Allah's Messenger, will the male and the female be together on that Day and will they be looking at one another?' Upon this Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "Aisha, the matter will be too serious for them to look to one another".<sup>(1)</sup>

Moreover, the people will flee from one another due to the rights and duties they did not fulfil between them. For example, one will flee from his brother because he tempted him, led him astray, fell short in his rights and did not fulfil his duties. Similarly, the child will flee from his parents because he fell short with regards to his good treatment with them. Conversely, the parents will flee from their children because they fell short in educating them. Similarly, the husband will flee from his wife because he neglected her rights, maintained her unlawfully or incited her to disobey Allah *the Almighty*. Fleeing is natural on the Day of Judgment, as the people are being taken to account and recompensed, and rights are being given to their owners. Furthermore, it is the Day of Retribution, on which the people are either plaintiffs or defendants.

After the people have been judged, the result will be:

وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّسْفِرَةٌ ۖ صَاحِكَةٌ مُّسْتَبْشِرَةٌ ۚ  
وَوُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَلَيْهَا غَبَرَةٌ ۖ تَرْهَقُهَا قَتَرَةٌ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرَةُ الْفَجَرَةُ ۚ

**On that Day some faces will be beaming [38] laughing,  
and rejoicing [39] but some faces will be dust-stained [40]  
and covered in darkness [41] those are the disbelievers,  
the licentious [42] (The Quran, 'Abasa: 38 - 42)**

The context of these verses is about the Account. After Allah *the Almighty* judges between the people, they will be in two states—being divided into two groups. The faces of the believers will be beaming, bright and full of happiness.

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 6527*.

That is to say that when the one who believes in Allah, Prophet Muhammad and the Quran sees the Day of Judgment and the Account, he will remember his belief in the unseen which he had adopted in the worldly life. Now, the unseen in which he had believed has come to pass. He believed in the truthfulness of the Day of Judgment, the Account and paradise. Therefore, when he sees them in the reality, he will be happy, hoping to be admitted into paradise. It is his belief in Allah *the Almighty* and him following Prophet Muhammad's Way of Guidance that saved him from the punishment in the Hellfire and caused him to be admitted into Paradise.

On the contrary, the other group, which is made-up of the disbelieving wrongdoers who resisted Allah's Way of Guidance and the truthful Call, will be in the opposite state. This is because they now realize the truthfulness of the unseen in which they disbelieved when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told them about it, as they belied him. They will be taken by surprise when they realize the truthfulness of the Resurrection and the Account; that is why their faces will be: '...dust-stained, and covered in darkness' ('*Abasa*: 40-41). Their faces will show the manifestations of sadness, and they will be dark and covered with dust out of the difficulty and hardships they will experience at that time.

Allah *the Almighty* concludes the chapter in question, saying: 'Those are the disbelievers, the wicked ones' ('*Abasa*: 42). That is, the people who have such an evil fate are the disbelievers and the wicked people. Describing them as such signifies that Allah *the Almighty* did not wrong them, for He *Glorified is He* punished them fairly, as His punishment fits the crime.

the chapter of

***at-Takwir***



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

**T**he chapter of *at-Takwir* <sup>(1)</sup>

إِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ ﴿١﴾ وَإِذَا النُّجُومُ انْكَدَرَتْ ﴿٢﴾ وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ سُيِّرَتْ ﴿٣﴾  
 وَإِذَا الْعِشَارُ عُطِّلَتْ ﴿٤﴾ وَإِذَا الْوُحُوشُ حُشِرَتْ ﴿٥﴾ وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ سُجِّرَتْ ﴿٦﴾  
 وَإِذَا النُّفُوسُ زُوِّجَتْ ﴿٧﴾ وَإِذَا الْمَوْءِدَةُ سُيِّلَتْ ﴿٨﴾ بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ ﴿٩﴾ وَإِذَا  
 الصُّحُفُ نُشِرَتْ ﴿١٠﴾ وَإِذَا السَّمَاءُ كُشِطَتْ ﴿١١﴾ وَإِذَا الْجَحِيمُ سُعِّرَتْ ﴿١٢﴾ وَإِذَا الْجَنَّةُ  
 أُزْلِفَتْ ﴿١٣﴾ عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا أَحْضَرَتْ ﴿١٤﴾

**When the sun is shrouded in darkness [1] when the stars are dimmed [2] when the mountains are set in motion [3] when pregnant camels are abandoned [4] when wild beasts are herded together [5] when the seas boil over [6] when souls are sorted into classes [7] when the baby girl buried alive is asked [8] for what sin she was killed [9] when the records of deeds are spread open [10] when the sky is stripped away [11] when Hell is made to blaze [12] and Paradise brought near [13] then every soul will know what it has brought about [14] (The Quran, *at-Takwir*: 1-14)**

Like all the chapters of the Quran, the chapter of *at-Takwir* has its special aims and indications. If we review the objectives of the verses of this noble chapter, we find that they are related to the calamities of the Day of Judgment

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(1) The chapter of *at-Takwir* is number 81 in the order of the Quran. It consists of 29 verses and was revealed after the chapter of *al-Masad* and before that of *al-A'la*. Therefore, it is the sixth chapter to be revealed.

and the revelation being sent down from Allah (God)<sup>(1)</sup> *the Almighty*. The latter objective highlights the necessity for the existence of a selected angelic Messenger to receive the revelation from Allah *Glorified is He* and conveys it to a selected human Messenger. This objective also includes illustrating people's stance on the revelation. After this, the chapter in question affirms the belief with regards to Allah's Will and its relation to man's will. These are the objectives of this chapter.

As for the linguistic style of this chapter, which expressed these objectives, it is divided into two kinds. First, a conditional in which the conditional particle '*idha*' ('when' or 'if'), which signifies something will truly happen, is employed and then followed by the result of that condition. The second style is an oath and its complement. However, the complement of the oath here is affirmed because, although the oath is stated as a negative form, it is followed by its complement.

If we review the first style, that is the conditional, we find it is used in twelve statements that talk about the events of the Day of Judgment. The conditional particle '*idha*' ('when' or 'if') is employed because it indicates the inevitable occurrence of all these events. Despite the many different conditions, the result of all of them is the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Then every soul will know what it has brought forward [for presentation]' (*at-Takwir*: 14). This verse means that when all the events mentioned in the verses take place, every unveiled matter will be revealed to mankind. He will know all what he had brought forward for presentation on that Day. We notice that the twelve conditional clauses mention various incidents and mighty events; some related to the heaven and some to the earth. The former includes the sun and the stars while the latter includes the mountains and the seas. On the earth there are the wild beasts, domestic animals, the pregnant camels in particular, and the baby girl who was buried alive and who will be asked for what sin she

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(1) The Islamic concept of 'Allah' is not the same as the Christian and Jewish concept of 'God'. But the word 'Allah' does not refer to a tribal god or the God of only Muslims; it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use 'Allah' rather than 'God' as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.

was killed. Furthermore, the events include some incidents related to Paradise, Hellfire and the Records of man's deeds.

Therefore, the various events of the conditional clauses portray the mighty change that will inflict the normal, organized existence and the universe which we are familiar with. We are used to seeing the sun, the stars, the seas, the cattle and the beasts all carrying out their function and role in life as usual. This familiarity makes the human being frequently forget the seriousness of these phenomena in the universe, remembering them only when they break their normal regularity.

Examples of these phenomena are clear in the human being. He has senses, biological systems and organs that function normally although he is unconscious about them. They carry out their functions perfectly without any intervention on his part, to the extent that one hardly notices that these biological systems are functioning inside his body. However, when one of these systems does not work properly, he starts to notice their existence and Allah's Blessings on him. Thus, normalcy leads to heedlessness. That is why some of the scholars say, 'The people closest to Allah *the Almighty* are those who suffer chronic diseases'. The disease reminds them about Allah's Blessings, and when the treatments and the medicines upset them, they seek refuge in Allah *the Almighty* saying, 'O my Lord, provide me with a cure'. Even the word 'Ow!', which is an instinctive word that the patient utters spontaneously, could be considered a short form of the word 'Allah'. It is as if he is seeking refuge with Allah, his Creator, when he utters it as an expression of pain. This is because it is Allah *the Almighty* Who had bestowed the blessing of having this biological system, and thus He *Glorified is He* is fully Able to reform it, remove its problem and cure it.

What we have said about the blessings bestowed on the human being is applicable to the blessings in the universe surrounding us; we are heedless of the blessings of the sun and the stars, for example. Out of their normalcy and un-changeability, we hardly remember the fact that they are blessings. Rain is a case in point. It is one of Allah's Great Blessings He bestows on us. We only realize its importance when the sky stops raining for a long period of time. This affects the grass, pastures and the growth of the plants.

Consequently, we notice the importance of rain and invoke Allah *the Almighty* to send it down. As such, the unbroken continuity of the blessing reduces man's ability to appreciate its value. Furthermore, the abnormal occurrences that happen to the self or the universe surrounding us serve as a reminder of the Creator, the Bestower of blessings.

These occurrences that remind us show us that the general system of the universe has to have some abnormalities. For example, in a village of ten thousand inhabitants, all the people could be healthy and well except two or three individuals; they could have one eye, be lame or have one arm. The existence of abnormalities and exceptions from the normal, sound state indicates that the creation was not brought into existence automatically or mechanically; there was no identical pattern for the creatures. Rather, the creatures are a manifestation of Allah's Full Ability to create without any preceding pattern, for He *Glorified is He* is the Creator, the Omnipotent, the All-Wise Who controls everything. This shows us that Allah *the Almighty* brought the creatures into existence for a Divine Objective.

The issue of abnormality is clearly manifested in the difference between the computer and the human mind. Some people say, 'Unlike the human mind, the computer does not err'. Yes, indeed, but this is one of the advantages of the human mind, not the computer, as it seems to some people. The computer does not make errors because it is mechanical and has no free choice, given the fact that it follows instructions laid down by another (man). By contrast, the human mind has the privilege of choosing, preferring and comparing between matters to reach the truth by itself. That is why it is prone to err, but it has the ability to identify the error and correct it. This is proof it has an innate disposition and that it actually exists as an independent entity.

Likewise, if the laws and elements in the universe had been static and unchanging, people will have said that they were mechanical. We see that the abnormality and exception prove that its creation is not mechanical; rather, it is created and preserved by Allah's Omnipotence and Ever-Watchfulness. Allah *Glorified is He* sets the laws in His universe, but He is beyond them. This means He *the Almighty* can effectuate these laws or break them. This is a very important matter in Belief.



Furthermore, the malfunctions and the abnormalities of the creatures are beneficial in the sense that they remind us about Allah, the Bestower of all Blessings. For example, when we see a blind man feeling his way, we remember the blessing of sight; when we see a lame person, we remember the blessing of having sound legs, and so on. That is, all these malfunctions and defects are means of showing His Blessings to their recipients who are heedless of them. This fact refutes the claim of those who make hasty conclusions about some phenomena in Allah's creation and allege that there is no aspect of wisdom or benefit in the existence of these defects and abnormalities. One may ask, 'What is the sin of those disabled people who are the means of clarifying Allah's Blessings to others?' We say, 'Allah *the Almighty* tests them through these defects and made them means of clarification of His Blessings, but He has recompensed them for these disabilities with what makes them at equal footing with the healthy, sound people, or even better. The blind person who lost the sense of sight may be endowed with a sound and attentive mind that make up for the loss of his sight. That is why we find that the blind are intelligent; they have bright minds and clear consciousness, due to losing their sense of sight. This is due to the fact that the phenomena of sight distract man and reduce his concentration. In his expression of this meaning, a poet said,

I was born blind and, therefore, smart  
So I hoped to become a home of knowledge.  
To my eye, the insight of my heart became a source  
Of knowledge that collects what the people neglect

That is why it is said that 'every disabled person is endowed with something in which he excels the people without disabilities'. Moreover, disability can result in amiability and prowess. This was the case with the German man who had one leg which was shorter than the other; therefore, he was prevented from joining the army and doing military service. He was sad for not being able to defend his country and as a result he decided to serve his country in another field where he could excel other people. Indeed, he excelled in the field of communications and achieved what the people without disabilities could not do. Furthermore, he was one of the reasons why Germany regained

its strong position after the Second World War. Clearly, his disability was a strong motive towards excellence.

Likewise, some people criticize the matter of creation when they see an insane person, for example. The insane person is deprived of the blessing of the mind by which Allah *the Almighty* distinguished the human beings from other genera. Such critics wrongly think that there is no wisdom or privilege in depriving the person of a mind. However, when we ponder over the state of the insane person, we find that Allah *the Almighty* has provided him with blessings through this deprivation. But how is this? Scholars say that the mind is a means for choosing different alternatives, some being good and reformatory and others evil and corruptive. The mind sometimes opts for the good and sometimes the evil. As for the insane person, his values are static; have we ever seen any insane person commit suicide, adultery or theft? Never, for only a sane people commit these crimes.

Let us compare between the sane and the insane person with regard to saying the truth or attesting to it. In such a situation, the sane person regards many considerations that may force him to falsify the truth or conceal his testimony. By contrast, the insane person speaks only the truth and never avoids it. He neither unlawfully favours anyone over another nor fears anyone when he tells the truth. In other words, he does not consider the consequences of speaking the truth. That is why it is said, 'Take wisdom from the tongues of the insane people'. We may ask why. This is because they lack the mind that makes them consider their words and beat about the bush.

Moreover, the insane person is not held accountable for his deeds, neither by the people in the worldly life or the Creator in the Hereafter. His Creator who deprived him of the privilege of the mind compensates him with what the sane people desire. This means that the Lord *the Almighty* gives him one of His Attributes, namely not being questioned for his deeds. If the sane people carefully considered this blessing, they will wish to be insane.

The chapter of *at-Takwir* proves that the wonderful creation was not created mechanically. It is neither an automatic, static creation, nor is it attributed to anyone except its Creator, Who brought it into existence without any previous pattern. The phenomena in the universe which we appreciate

and are familiar with throughout the different centuries and generations are regarded as static, permanent and stable. However, a day will come when these phenomena will be destructed and turn into fragments; they will be changed by the commands of their Creator. Thus, although they seem permanent and stable, they will ultimately cease to exist, for Allah *the Almighty* is the only One Who is Everlasting and Unchangeable.

The sun, which is a mighty, great creature, will be: ‘...shrouded in darkness’ (*at-Takwir*: 1). This means that it will be rolled up and thrown into the space. As for the stars, they will: ‘...fall, losing their luster’ (*at-Takwir*: 2). This signifies that they will be scattered and fall down. As such, all the elements of the universe will be subjected to a mighty change. This calls the sane man to believe that there is an everlasting, permanent and great Power behind the creation of the universe, because the universe is changeable. The sane person is the one who does not depend on the phenomena of the universe which are seemingly static and permanent, for, in fact, they are fleeting and will cease. Thus, he should depend on the Lord and the Creator of these phenomena.

It is as if the reality of these phenomena clarifies to us and attracts our attention to the fact that man’s actions are not objectives in themselves; rather, they are means leading to ends. The human being does not proceed energetically and actively to fulfil any action except when it is important to him and he feels desirous of it. The human being regards the world and universe wherein he lives as an aim in itself, as he considers it static and stable. However, he should not cling to the world or be tempted by it because it will ultimately come to an end. Hence, he should not depend on his actions and thoughts on a fleeting world; rather, one should depend on the One Who lasts eternally and will never cease to exist, namely Allah, the Creator and the Regulator of the universe. Allah *Glorified is He* is the only Independent, Everlasting God. Everything else depends on Him and lasts only according to His Will.

The Lord *the Most High* starts this chapter in this way to show us that if we consider the world and the phenomena of the universe as our ultimate aim, they will be inflicted with a mighty and frightening annihilation. Clearly, we should seek refuge with, cling to and search for the real aim of our existence.

We should ask about Allah's Rules and the means that lead us to Him *Glorified is He*. In such a case, man's movements will be directed towards this original, everlasting aim; he will seek it eagerly and energetically because it is the refuge and the last, sole hope of salvation from the calamities and the mighty destruction of the universe that will leave nothing. The means leading to this aim is Allah's Way of Guidance, which was sent down to us through a Messenger from among the angels to a human Messenger, who delivered the Message on behalf of Allah *Glorified is He*.

After this, the verses confirm apparently contradicting issues, but they, in reality, are harmonious: the slave's free will and its relation to Allah's Will. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says at the end of the chapter: 'But you will only wish to do so by the will of Allah...' (*at-Takwir*: 29).

Let us now explain the subjects of the conditional clauses at the beginning of the chapter: 'When the sun is shrouded in darkness, when the stars fall, losing their luster, when the mountains are set in motion, when pregnant camels are abandoned, when wild beasts are herded together, when the seas are made to boil over, when souls are sorted into groups [like with like], when the baby girl buried alive is asked for what sin she was killed, when the records of deeds are spread open, when the sky is stripped away, when Hell is made to blaze and when Paradise is brought near, then every soul will know what it has brought forward [for presentation]' (*at-Takwir*: 1-14). We say that the condition enables the result to be fulfilled. For example, if one says to his child, 'If you study, you will succeed', the result will happen if the condition is fulfilled. But if we scrutinize this matter, we find that in reality the condition is met when one knows its outcome. But how is this? In order for the child to study, he should be encouraged to study and persuaded to try to succeed by comprehending the outcome: the happiness and fruit of achieving success, and also by recognizing the consequences of failure. Thus, knowledge of the result and the development of its idea motivate the student to fulfil the condition. In such a way it is as if the condition is between two results: the result after being persuaded and the clear result of the condition. That is to say that knowing the result of studying is a motivation to study, and succeeding due to studying is the clear outcome.

Similarly, Allah *the Almighty* says here: ‘When the sun is shrouded in darkness...then every soul will know what it has brought forward [for presentation]’ (*at-Takwir*: 1-14). As such, it is as if the knowledge of the soul is the motive behind the mighty events. This is because if the universe remained stable and static, life will remain as usual and normal—there will be no difference between the follower of the Way of Guidance and the one who violates it. Therefore, His saying: ‘Then every soul will know what it has brought forward’ (*at-Takwir*: 14) is the result of all the conditional clauses. This means that when all the conditions are met and their events take place, every soul will know what it has brought forward (for presentation).

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘When the sun is shrouded in darkness, when the stars fall, losing their luster, when the mountains are set in motion, when pregnant camels are abandoned...’ (*at-Takwir*: 1-4) to the end of the conditional clauses is meant to make it easy for us to understand these mighty events according to our intellectual ability. However, we, in reality, cannot imagine the true state of these events as they are beyond our imagination. Consequently, Allah *the Almighty* tells us about them using matters and ideas that are familiar to us. For example, when the Lord *the Almighty* says: ‘When the sun is shrouded in darkness’ (*at-Takwir*: 1), there is no other expression that can give us a better portrayal of this event. The expression used here serves as a proximate portrayal of the real event.

The meaning of the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘... shrouded in darkness’ (*at-Takwir*: 1) is that the sun will be rolled up to be like a ball. However, we may think this is not new to us, as we see the sun in that shape. But scholars say that we do not really see the sun; rather, we see its bright rays which seem like a ball. By contrast, in the Hereafter, the sun will be destructed, thrown away and shrouded in darkness. This is a terrifying, mighty event; can you imagine the world without sun rays, heat and warmth. You should also ponder on the rolled up object; ‘rolling something up’ linguistically indicates that it will soon come to an end and stop its function. For example, one may say, ‘*Tawayt ath-thawb* (I rolled up the cloak)’, which means that he took off his cloak and put it aside, as its function has ended. We also say, ‘*Tawayt al-kitab* (I rolled up or closed the book)’, meaning that I have finished reading it. Such

things, the cloak and the book, do their function only when they are spread out. When they have fulfilled their function, they are rolled up and closed. By contrast, there are other objects that only fulfil their function when they are joined together, like the scissors; they do not work when they are open.

Likewise, when the sun is rolled up and shrouded in darkness, this indicates the end of its function and when it will cease to be. This is due to the fact that the new existence that follows that mighty event needs neither its light nor its heat. It is the existence in the Hereafter that depends on the Ultimate Causer and not causal factors, a fact which is clear in the Lord's saying: 'On the day when the earth shall be changed into a different earth, and the heavens (as well)...' (*Ibrahim*: 48). Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* says about the Hereafter: 'And the earth shall beam with the light of its Lord...' (*az-Zumar*: 69). At that time, the earth will be illuminated with the Lord's light.

With regards to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'When the stars fall, losing their lustre' (*at-Takwir*: 2), it means that the stars will scatter and fall down. As for His saying: 'When the mountains are set in motion' (*at-Takwir*: 3), it refers to the time when the mountains will move and be removed from their places, a fact which is clear in the Lord's saying: 'When the mountains will vanish like a mirage' (*an-Naba'*: 20).

With regards to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'When pregnant camels (*al-i'shar*) are abandoned' (*at-Takwir*: 4), the Arabic word '*i'shar*' refers to the pregnant she-camels which have reached ten months of pregnancy and are about to give birth. The she-camels, especially pregnant ones, used to be the most precious property of the Arabs and the most important object for the Bedouin. This is because they give birth to new camels, produce milk and so on. That is why the Arab used to like this kind of property and nothing could distract him from taking care of it. However, when the calamities of the Day of Judgment take place, these calamities will distract him from the most important type of property he has, that is they will make him abandon his pregnant she-camels. Some scholars say that the Arabic word '*al-i'shar*' refers to the clouds that carry rain water, which in turn causes the plants and the pastures to grow, and the earth to flourish. Thus, when the Day of Judgment comes and the order of the universe collapses, there will be no need for that rain.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘When wild beasts are herded together’ (*at-Takwir*: 5), the word ‘beast’ refers to the wild, intrinsically undomesticated animals. Their wildness is a natural quality that Allah *Glorified is He* instilled in them. The man may tame a lion to use it in the circus. Apparently, he tames and domesticates it, but it still remains a wild lion. As such, this domestication is apparent and temporary, as it neither changes the nature of the animal nor makes its state of being domesticated extend to other people. That is to say that the wild animal is only tamed with regard to its trainer, but it is still wild to other people. Some other animals, including all their genera and families, are by nature domesticated with all people.

The one who ponders on the issue of domesticated animals finds that the wild ones constitute a minority when compared to the rest of the animals and the cattle on earth. It is as if their wildness and their not being subjected by man are an exception to the rule that ‘livestock serves man’. This exception must be for a Divine Wisdom, including that man fully recognizes Allah’s Power and will not be deceived by the subjection of most animals to his service and benefit. In this way, he will not forget the Bestower of these blessings while paying attention to them. Allah *the Almighty* made the large camel subservient to man, and made riding it easy for even a small boy. On the contrary, one cannot domesticate a snake or even a flea. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to us, ‘If We had not subjected most of the animals to you, you will not have been able to domesticate any of them by yourselves’. That is why Allah *the Almighty* shows His favours on us, saying: ‘Do they not see that We have created cattle for them, out of what Our hands have wrought, so they are their masters? And We have subjected them to them, so some of them they have to ride and some of them they eat’ (*Ya Sin*: 71-72).

With regards to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘When wild beasts are herded together’ (*at-Takwir*: 5), it refers to the time when the beasts are gathered. Normally, they do not come together with human beings. The beasts and the human beings both stay away from each other. As we fear such beasts, we can never be in one place with them. Even some of the beasts flee from other beasts, they chase the one who fears them, which is the meaning of wildness. But the situation will be completely different in the Hereafter, for the mighty

events of the Day of Judgment will astonish them. This will result in the beasts herding together after being scattered and coming together after mutual repugnance. They will be gathered in the same place with the human beings, as the situation on the Day of Judgment is that of humility, humbleness and submission—not that of wildness in which the strong eat the weak. The sane person should unbridle the rein of his imagination to realize the extent of the panic and imagine the calamitous situation, which confuses even the wild beasts, making them forsake their wild nature.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘When the seas are made to boil over’ (*at-Takwir*: 6), the Arabic word ‘*sujjirat*’ (boil over) bears three meanings. The first means that the sea will turn into a blazing fire, as it is said, ‘*Sujjirat al-furn* (the fire was set alight in the oven)’. The other possible meanings for this word are ‘to be full of something’ or ‘to be preserved’. We can ask: which of these three meanings is the most suitable one to convey Allah’s Intention? The closer meaning, the one which changes the normal state of the water, is that the sea water, which we use to quench fire, will itself turn into a blazing fire. Allah *the Almighty* says in another verse: ‘When the seas are made to burst forth and explode’ (*al-Infitar*: 3). Modern science has used the term ‘explosion’ to refer to the atomic explosion, that is, the fragmentation of its components producing a destructive, mighty explosion. Likewise, if the molecules of water, that is oxygen and hydrogen, are separated, the seas turn into a blazing fire. As we have said previously, Allah *the Almighty* portrays the events according to our intellectual ability and the understanding that our mind can accept. Without this type of portrayal, the matter is beyond imagination.

After this, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘When souls are sorted into groups [like with like]’ (*at-Takwir*: 7). The ancient philosophers could not, and even up till now cannot, define the word ‘soul’. They could not understand its true meaning but rather uttered some idle talk about it. Only the Glorious Quran defined for us the meaning of the ‘soul’, that is, the mixture between the spirit and that of the body. Once they are mixed, they produce the soul. Thus, it is not formed when one of them is apart from the other. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says about the meaning of life: ‘Allah takes the souls at the time of their death...’ (*az-Zumar*: 42). This verse means that the Lord *Glorified is He* separates the



spirit from the body to cause the person to die. This indicates that the soul is formed by these two elements, the spirit and the body.

With regards to Allah's saying: 'When souls are sorted into groups [like with like]' (*at-Takwir*: 7), the Arabic word '*zuwijat*' (sorted into groups), according to some scholars, means that after the separation of the spirit and the body, the former will return to the latter once again on the Day of Judgment. According to this meaning, the verse refers to the gathering of the spirit with the body. Another possible interpretation is that the word means that all the souls will be joined into groups; every soul will join another one. This meaning is explained in the following verses: 'And you shall be three groups (*azwajan*). Then (as to) the companions of the right hand; how happy are the companions of the right hand! And (as to) the companions of the left hand; how wretched are the companions of the left hand! And the foremost are the foremost. These are they who are nearest (to Allah)' (*al-Waqi'a*: 7-11), where the word '*azwajan*' (groups) is derived from the word '*zuwijat*' (sorted into groups). Thus, the meaning of Allah's saying: 'When souls are sorted into groups' (*at-Takwir*: 7) is that all the similar groups will be gathered together. The people will be divided into groups; that is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: '(Remember) the day when We will call every people with their Imam...' (*al-Isra'*: 71).

Another possible interpretation is that every soul will be joined to its deeds; every human being will be united with his deeds, as the deed leaves him after he does it. This deed produces an effect which ceases to exist in some actions and lasts in other ones. Afterwards, the effects that last either eventually leave the man or he leaves them when he dies.

The human being usually thinks that his action, either good or evil, end after he finishes doing it, but one's action, in reality, does not separate from him, for it and its effect always accompanies him. And on the Day of Judgment, the souls will be gathered together with their deeds, that is, everyone will be united with all his actions. The person will find all the deeds that he has done in this worldly life, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Then every soul will know what it has brought forward [for presentation]' (*at-Takwir*: 14), and: 'On the day 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 was a long duration of time...' (*Al-Imran*: 30).

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'When the baby girl buried alive (*al-maw'uda*) is asked, for what sin she was killed' (*Al-Imran*: 30), the Arabic word '*al-maw'uda*' refers to the baby girl that some people used to bury alive in the pre-Islamic era. We should ponder on the beauty of the expression relating the matter of burying the baby girls alive. Who should be asked about this crime?! Is it the murdered or the murderer?! The expression here describes the brutality and the heinousness of this crime because the father abuses his daughter while he was the cause of her existence. In fact, such a father and all the people came into existence through the like of that female. Thus, killing the girl indicates hardheartedness and callousness. How can such a father reject his daughter whom he brought into existence after enjoying sexual intercourse?! What is the shame in her existence while her father was born by a similar female?! If his mother had been buried alive by his grandfather, he will not have come into existence. After his mother had given birth to him, he searched for the like of this female to marry and enjoy. Furthermore, he wanted to have an offspring from her. Thus, such a father has committed a heinous crime that is not expected from him, in particular, as there is no single justification or reason for committing that crime. What has this poor baby girl done for living underground to be better for her than living on the surface of the earth?!

Logically and emotionally speaking, this action is a heinous crime because such a father buries his own daughter, not that of another person. That is why Allah *the Almighty* expresses this matter using a condemnatory, reproaching style; instead of asking the father who killed, the killed girl herself is asked, 'What have you done? What is the crime that you have committed whereby your father killed you?' This is the strongest style of rebuke and reproach for the father who committed this crime against his own child. Moreover, the style recalls the painful image of the father who buries his own baby girl in order for us to imagine that horrible scene before our eyes.

This style is similar to what the Quran relates about Prophet 'Isa (Jesus), as a response to those who said about him, 'He is the Son of God or the third person of three'. This is idle talk that the Christians falsified about Allah *the Almighty* and Prophet 'Isa *peace be upon him*. Allah *Glorified is He* does not ask

them about this; rather He *the Almighty* asks Prophet 'Isa, saying: 'And when Allah will say, "O 'Isa (Jesus), son of Mariam (Mary), did you say to men, 'Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah'..." (al-Ma'ida: 116). This question about that crime is posed to Prophet 'Isa, even though he did not commit it. This question should be posed to those who committed that crime.

To continue, with regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'When the records of deeds are spread open (*nushirat*)' (*at-Takwir*: 10), the word 'records' refers to books of the actions in which all the slaves' deeds are written down. 'Spread open' here means that the records will be given to their owner and will be opened after being rolled up. The Arabic word '*nashr*' (spread open), from which the word '*nushirat*' is derived, has many meanings: it means that the records will fly to their respective owners for them to read what they have brought forward. Another possible meaning is that the records used to be rolled up and will be opened for their owners for them to read their deeds. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And the record [of deeds] will be placed [open], and you will see the criminals fearful of what is in it. They will say, "Oh, woe to us! What is this book that leaves nothing small or great but it takes account of it?" And they will find what they did present [before them]. And your Lord does injustice to no one' (*al-Kahf*: 49).

With regards to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'When the sky is stripped away (*koshitat*)' (*at-Takwir*: 11), the Arabic word '*al-kasht*', from which the word '*kushitat*' (stripped away) is derived, refers to removing and stripping something, as when we skin a goat by stripping its skin off its body. Stripping away the sky is a mighty event that goes beyond all imagination. This is due to the fact that we do not know the size of the sky. The case is even more unimaginable for the destruction of the structure of the sky and its alteration to another one? Is this not a terrifying event?!

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'When Hell is made to blaze' (*at-Takwir*: 12), it means that hell is blazing to the extent that some part of it eats the rest out of the extreme heat and its waiting and yearning for its dwellers. And as for His saying: 'And when Paradise is brought near' (*at-Takwir*: 13), it means that paradise will be prepared and brought near to those who will enter it. These scenes of Hell and Paradise are seen before the Account.

After all this event, the result comes: 'Then every soul will know what it has brought forward [for presentation]' (*at-Takwir*: 14). Every one of us will see his place in Paradise and in Hell. This sight is called the eye of certainty which is mentioned in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Striving for more distracts you, until you go into your graves. No indeed! You will come to know. No indeed! In the end you will come to know. 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*: 1-8).

The first stage of knowledge is certain knowledge, which is the mental picture that we took from the truthful news that we heard and believed in. This mental knowledge is elevated to the stage of the eye of certainty when we see the realization of this mental picture; when it becomes a real event perceived by the eye. This stage is more certain than the first one. The true certainty, which is the third stage, comes when we interact and engage with this reality, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Then why do you not, if you are not to be recompensed, bring it [the soul] back, if you are truthful? And if the deceased was one of those who will be brought near [to Allah for having walked aright], then [for him is] rest and bounty and a garden of pleasure. And if he was of the companions of the right, then [the angels will say], "Peace for you; [you are] from the companions of the right". But if he was of the deniers [who were] astray, then [for him is] a welcome of scalding water, and burning in Hellfire. Indeed, this is the true certainty. So exalt the name of your Lord, the Most Great' (*al-Waqi'a*: 86-96).

There is a difference between these stages; certain knowledge, which is the first stage, refers to the mental picture that still cannot be elevated to the level of facts. As for the eye of certainty, the second stage, it is general knowledge of the truth which is gained through the sense of sight. The true certainty is the third stage in which the truth and its meanings are actually experienced in detail. Accordingly, what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has told us in the worldly life about Paradise and Hell concern the stage of certain knowledge. When the Day of Judgment comes, we will see the reality of Paradise and Hell with our naked eyes, which is the stage of the eye of certainty. The third stage, the true certainty, takes place after Allah

*Glorified is He* has judged between the people, and thus the dwellers of paradise and those of Hell are admitted into their respective places.

In the next life: 'Every soul will know what it has brought forward [for presentation]' (*at-Takwir*: 14). This verse shows that everyone will come to know what he has done in the worldly life. The one who ponders on this verse finds that the verb 'brought forward' is attributed to the 'soul', it is the subject of the verb although it should be the object. This is because the soul cannot do any action or pursue any means in the Hereafter, for it will have no choice in what will happen to it. However, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to tell us that the soul plays a part in that matter because the deeds which will be brought forward are the actions done in the worldly life. Therefore when He *the Almighty* brings forward the actions of the soul on the Day of Judgment, it is as though the soul is the one which has brought them forward. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says here: 'Every soul will know what it has brought forward [for presentation]' (*at-Takwir*: 14). This matter gives us a picture about the Hour, affirming that the action therein can be attributed to its real doer or to the object that participated in and experienced it. As such, we conclude that the action can be attributed to both of them.

We have clarified this matter in the explanation of the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed (*kutiba*) for you...' (*al-Baqara*: 183). Here, the passive voice of the verb '*kutiba*' (is prescribed) is employed instead of the active voice '*katabtu*' (I have prescribed). It is as if Allah *the Almighty* did not prescribe fasting alone; rather, the slave participated in that action when he willingly believed in the Lord *Glorified is He* and obeyed His Commands. It is as though he entered into a covenant with Allah *Glorified is He* as a party, and participated in writing this covenant. This matter is proven by the fact that Allah *the Almighty* did not prescribe fasting on all the people but rather only on those who entered into a covenant of faith with Him *the Almighty*. Those people are the ones addressed in His saying: '...fasting is prescribed for you...' (*al-Baqara*: 183). Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says here: 'Every soul will know what it has brought forward [for presentation]' (*at-Takwir*: 14). This is because He *Glorified is He* does not bring forward something irrelevant to the soul; rather He *the Almighty* brings forward its

actions and their consequences. This is how the soul participates in the action of bringing forward the deeds.

But what is the kind of knowledge that the soul will realize on that Day: 'Every soul will know what it has brought forward' (*at-Takwir*: 14). Scholars hold the position that this knowledge will be the eye of certainty. As for the believer, he believed in the news about that Day and acted upon the Divine Teachings and Instructions in the worldly life. Now, he sees his actions and their reward with an eye of certainty after having mental pictures of them in this life. Likewise, the disbeliever sees his actions and their punishment. He is a wretched person because he did not believe in the news about that Day when it reached him through Prophet Muhammad. Consequently, he did not benefit from that news and, therefore, became a loser on the Day of Judgment. Such a loss is the greatest form of loss, as his worldly life will not avail him at all. From this we understand that after being obscure and hidden, the actions will be totally clear and apparent; no one will be able to deny or disclaim them.

Thus, the conditional style and its result convey the first objective of this chapter, that is, describing the mightiness and the greatness of the destination that all the people will ultimately reach, with their deeds being brought forward for them (for presentation). This style teaches us that the sound way to motivate someone to reach an aim is to establish the reality and importance of this aim in his soul. This is because the soul does not eagerly pursue the means to reach an aim unless it perceives the importance of this aim. As long as the result here is: 'Every soul will know what it has brought forward [for presentation]' (*at-Takwir*: 14), the verses present the context in a manner that makes the soul pursue the means of reaching that aim and makes the hardship of obedience and the difficulties of the acts of worship easy for it.

Then the context, after expressing the greatness of the destination under discussion when all deeds will be brought forward, directs our attention to the second purpose of the chapter, saying, 'Do not be deceived by the stability and the normalcy of the universe, for a Day will come when it will collapse and totally alter, resulting in all the phenomena of the universe being destroyed'. The purpose of showing the greatness of the destination in the last objective is to encourage us to prepare ourselves for this destination by relying

on the suitable means that guarantee our salvation from all the calamities of that Day of Judgment. As a matter of fact, the only means of salvation is represented in following Allah's Way of Guidance, which reached us through the revelation that a chosen angelic Messenger transmitted to a chosen human Messenger. The latter then conveyed that Way of Guidance to us because we cannot receive it directly from Allah *the Almighty*. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* takes the subsequent oath, saying:

فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِالْخُنُوسِ ۝۱۵ الْجَوَارِ الْكُنُوسِ ۝۱۶ وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا عَسْعَسَ ۝۱۷  
وَالصُّبْحِ إِذَا تَنَفَّسَ ۝۱۸ إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ ۝۱۹ ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ ۝۲۰  
مُطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ ۝۲۱ وَمَا صَاحِبُكُمْ بِمَجْنُونٍ ۝۲۲

**I swear by the planets [15] that recede, move, and hide [16] by the night that descends [17] by the dawn that softly breathes [18] this is the speech of a noble messenger [19] who possesses great strength and is held in honour by the Lord of the Throne [20] he is obeyed there and worthy of trust [21] Your companion is not mad [22] (The Quran, *at-Takwir*: 15 - 22)**

With regards to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'I do not [need to] swear...' (*at-Takwir*: 15), we find that the oath is negated but its complement is mentioned: 'Truly this is the speech of a generous, noble Messenger' (*at-Takwir*: 19). That is, the complement of the oath is affirmed even though the oath is negated; how can this be?! Scholars hold the position that the negated oath here means the oath has already been affirmed. In other words, the saying 'I do not swear', means 'I swear'. This is because Allah *the Almighty* does not take an oath the same way we do, as He *Glorified is He* swears in whatever way He wants. For example, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'By the mount, and [by] a Book inscribed' (*at-Tur*: 1-2). Here, He *Glorified is He* does not literally say, 'I swear by the mount'.

Likewise, Allah's saying here: 'I do not [need to] swear...' (*at-Takwir*: 15) means that He *the Almighty* has taken an oath, and the complement of the oath is mentioned. If the oath had not been intended, He *the Almighty* will not have mentioned its complement. In fact, the intended meaning here is that Allah *the Almighty* did

not have to take an oath to affirm this particular complement because it is such a clear and well-known fact that it does not need an oath to affirm it. In general, the oath implies that the speaker recognizes that the addressee is ambivalent about the truthfulness of a given subject and doubtful about it. The normal speech does not need any oath to affirm it, as when one says, 'So-and-so visited me yesterday'. But if the speaker finds that the addressee denies or is doubtful about what he hears, the speaker will take an oath that suits the addressee's degree of denial and doubt. This will eliminate his doubt or denial, as it is known that the oath is the strongest proof.

In fact, Allah *Glorified is He* has clarified to us all the matters in the most persuasive ways, and His Way of Guidance came with all the clear proofs. The oath has been only used concerning matters that required it. In fact Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Is it not sufficient as regards your Lord that He is a witness over all things?' (*Fussilat*: 53) This verse means that it should have been sufficient for the people to believe Allah *the Almighty* when He *Glorified is He* says to them, 'I have done such-and-such'. But they regarded this report an insufficient proof and were ambivalent about accepting it, and as a result He *the Almighty* takes oaths so that no one has an excuse to belie the reports.

To conclude, the matter about which Allah *the Almighty* swears, saying: 'I do not [need to] swear by...' (*at-Takwir*: 15) does not actually need an oath because it is totally clear and obvious. If the mind carefully ponders on it, it will believe that it is true. That is why Allah *the Almighty* does not really need to swear to affirm it; but when He *Glorified is He* swears in this regard, He swears by the planets that recede, move and hide.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...the planets that recede [after appearing] (*al-khunnas*), run their course and [then] set and hide (*al-kunnas*)...' (*at-Takwir*: 15-16), the Arabic word '*al-khunnas*' (recede) refers to the planets that move in the sky; sometimes they appear to the people on the horizon and sometimes they disappear. As for the Arabic words '*al-jawari al-kunnas*' (run their courses and then set and hide), scholars have opined that they refer to the stars that appear at night and move from one place to another. They sometimes appear and sometimes disappear, but they do truly exist. The word '*al-kunnas*' (set and hide) is derived from the word '*kinas azh-zhaby*', that is, the home of the gazelle.



The intended meaning of the verses in question is that the movement of the planets and the stars in the sky dictates that if some of them appear, the rest disappear. For example, when the sun rises, the moon and the stars disappear, but they still really do exist even if we cannot perceive them with our senses. If we carefully reflect on the Quranic way of expressing the meaning intended by Allah *the Almighty* we find it alludes to the fact that man's perception is not the criterion for perceiving realities, for one may not perceive something before him. This means the human being should not depend on his perception to realize the surrounding facts and realities. Furthermore, if a truthful person tells him about some facts, he should believe him; he should not dare to belie him just because he cannot perceive such facts with his senses. Moreover, man should realize that his abilities are limited, and that his senses cannot encompass all the creatures in the tangible universe. If this is the case, then what should we think about the spiritual beings?

Let us give an example to illustrate this fact; the spirit is placed inside the human being and it is the secret of his life and the cause of his movement. But can he perceive it by any of his faculties? Does he know exactly where it exists? Thus, when he is told that there is an Omnipotent God Who has created and regulated this universe and sent Messengers with a revelation that contains the Way of Guidance, he should believe this and control his actions with this Omnipotent God.

We notice here another aspect of the precision of the expression in the Quran: Allah *the Almighty* swears by the stars that recede, move and hide in order to confirm the truthfulness of the revelation that the Archangel Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be on him* who was entrusted with the revelation, brought down to the heart of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who was, in his turn, trustworthy in conveying it to the people. There is an obvious relation between the stars in the heaven and the revelation, for the stars guide the people in the darkness of the night, as Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and by the stars they are guided' (*an-Nahl*: 16). Likewise, the revelation is a spiritual guidance by which the people leave the darkness of polytheism and disbelief and enter into the light of Monotheism and Belief. Thus, there is a direct relation between the complement of the oath, that is affirming the truthfulness of the revelation, and the object by which He *the Almighty* swears, that is the stars.

Allah *the Almighty* continues to take other oaths, saying: ‘And by the night that moves [close], and by the dawn that breathes softly’ (*at-Takwir*: 17-18). These verses refer to the night when it comes with its darkness and the dawn when it comes with its light and brightness. The previous verses mention many oaths. We may ask what they all refer to. The answer is provided in His saying: ‘Truly this is the speech of a generous, noble Messenger’ (*at-Takwir*: 19). This is the second purpose of the chapter in question and the means that lead to the praiseworthy objective, namely Allah’s Way of Guidance which came to us through the revelation in order that we live happily in the worldly life and be saved and prosperous in the Hereafter.

The human mind can neither guide itself to the Way of Guidance nor establish the like of its rulings. This is because its only ability of understanding with regards to the religion and matters of Belief is to believe in the existence of a Supreme Power for this universe. However, it cannot know by itself the reality of this Power, what this Power wants from us (His Rules), the reward for obeying it and the consequences of disobeying it. It is enough for the mind to believe in the main pillar of faith, that is, the existence of that Power, which is Allah *the Almighty*. Thus, we cannot know the Power that regulates the universe except when this Power expresses itself, saying, ‘I am so-and-so and what I want from you is such-and-such’. The Way of Guidance must come from on high in order to guarantee our success with regards to our deeds when we reach our final destination and stand humbly before that Power.

Allah *the Almighty* prescribed the Way of Guidance that regulates our lives. Man will ultimately reach the praiseworthy, beloved destination if he believes that Allah, the Supreme Power, is his Creator Who created the universe without any previous pattern, and set the rules that preserve man in order for him to become upright and fulfil his obligations. Consequently, he must accept that Divine Way of Guidance and reject everyone else; this is an unquestionable matter—no one except the Creator sets the rules for His creation. For this reason, all the defects that appear in the universe stem from violating Allah’s Way of Guidance or following another man-made way of life. People are all equal, so how can some of them set rules for all the others?

As such, it has been logically concluded that our Creator is the One Who should set the rules to preserve us. This is due to the fact that the one who set

rules should meet certain conditions, which include his comprehensive knowledge of the details of the object ruled, that is, the human being. Furthermore, he should act wisely and have no interest or whims with regards to the people for whom he sets the rules. These conditions, and others, are only satisfied by Allah *the Almighty*.

Now, if we accepted that Allah *Glorified is He* sets our rules, how can He *the Almighty* deliver His Way of Guidance and Rules to us? He *the Almighty* does not address everyone directly and that is why an intermediary must exist to receive the revelation from the Lord *Glorified is He* and deliver it to the people; the human being cannot receive revelation directly from Allah *the Almighty*. In fact, the human being, by nature, cannot contact the Supreme Power directly. Consequently, Allah *the Almighty* chose a Messenger from among the angels and another from among human beings to serve as intermediaries. The angelic Messenger receives the revelation from Allah *Glorified is He* and delivers it to the human Messenger, who in turn conveys it to the human beings. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Allah chooses Messengers from among the Angels and from among men...’ (*al-Hajj*: 75).

It is as if Allah *the Almighty* reassures us about the authenticity of the Way of Guidance that comes from Him *Glorified is He* for He *the Almighty* ensures all the means of protecting it by choosing an honoured, virtuous and truthful angel who is obedient by nature, a fact which is clear in His saying: ‘...they [angels] do not disobey Allah in what He commands them, and do as they are commanded’ (*at-Tahrim*: 6). Moreover, the authenticity of the Way of Guidance is ensured by Him choosing an honoured Messenger from among human beings, namely Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. His people knew his ancestors and the minor details of his life, and easily recognised his truthfulness and honesty, even before he bore the responsibility of conveying Allah’s Way of Guidance and Message to them. Before being a Prophet, the people of Mecca used to entrust Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with their properties and call him, ‘the truthful, honest one’. Furthermore, he was one of them, not a stranger, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Certainly, a Messenger has come to you from among yourselves. Your suffering distresses him; he is deeply concerned for you, and gentle and merciful to the believers’ (*at-Tawba*: 128).

To recap, the second purpose of the story in this chapter is to confirm the authenticity of the revelation coming from Allah *the Almighty*. It is emphasized by the oath which affirms this fact to the addressees. When Allah *the Almighty* tells us about the Archangel Jibril (Gabriel), the chosen Messenger who was entrusted with the revelation, He *the Almighty* mentions some of this angel's illustrative qualities, as we cannot see him. He says: 'Truly this is the speech of a generous, noble Messenger, who possesses great strength and is held in honour by the Lord of the Throne. He is obeyed there and worthy of trust' (*at-Takwir*: 19-21). These qualities are especially mentioned to clear the selected Angelic Messenger of any charge of corrupting the Books that preceded the Quran. In fact, it is the human beings who corrupted them through distortion, concealment and alteration in a form of additions and omissions.

From this we see that Allah *the Almighty* wanted the Islamic Way of Guidance to be different from all the previous ways which suffered corruption. In order that it does not suffer the same fate, He *the Almighty* ensured the authenticity of the revelation, saying: 'Truly this is the speech of a generous, noble Messenger, who possesses great strength and is held in honour by the Lord of the Throne. He is obeyed there and worthy of trust' (*at-Takwir*: 19-21). Here, the word 'speech' refers to the Quran, while the word 'Messenger' refers to Archangel Jibril *peace be upon him* who has a great position with Allah *the Almighty* and is obeyed in the supreme assembly of the angels.

By contrast, Allah *the Almighty* does not mention the qualities of the chosen Messenger from among human beings, that is Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Rather, He *the Almighty* only reminds the Prophet's people about his companionship, saying: 'Your companion is not mad' (*at-Takwir*: 22). The companionship clearly indicates closeness and affinity. They have known Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* since his childhood, and they recognized his truthfulness and honesty. In fact, the honest person is beyond suspicion. For this reason they do not need any illustrative qualities to know Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; all what is needed is to refute any accusation levelled against him: 'Your companion is not mad' (*at-Takwir*: 22).

Thus, the oath serves as a confirmation of the authenticity of the revelation coming from Allah *Glorified is He* and the honesty and veracity of the Angelic

Messenger and the human one in conveying it—both were intermediaries between Allah *the Almighty* and His slaves. The negated oath, which is used in an earlier verse, lays more emphasis on the complement than a normal oath.

Before leaving our discussion about taking an oath by the planets that recede, move and hide, we should notice a subtle Divine Indication: the stars and the planets appear alternately, none of them are permanently in the sky. That is to say that when the sun appears, the stars disappear. We may ask where they go. They remain in the sky but the intense light of the sun makes them unperceivable to our eyes. That is why a poet says,

Intense clarity may lead to obscurity.

As such, the disappearance of the stars results from the intense light of the sun. For example, one may look for his glasses in a particular place while they are already right before him.

Moreover, we notice a subtle relation between the oath: ‘I do not [need to] swear by the planets that recede [after appearing], run their course, and [then] set and hide, and by the night that moves [close], and by the dawn that breathes softly’ (*at-Takwir*: 15-18) and the Message of Islam. When the principles of the previous Messages disappeared, ignorance prevailed on the earth. It is as if the night of ignorance ended when the dawn of Islam breathed. If we ponder on His saying: ‘And by the night that moves [close]’ (*at-Takwir*: 17), we find that it alludes to the fact that the stars and the planets refer to the heavenly Messages. The stars and the planets are means of tangible guidance and the Messages are means of spiritual guidance. The Arabic word ‘*as’as*’ (moves) expresses this meaning. It is formed from two similar syllables ‘*as*’ and ‘*as*’. This word refers to walking in the darkness without any guidance; such a walker feels his way because he cannot see before him. We also notice that the Quranic expression attributes the moving to the night and not to the people, which is more eloquent. It is as if it is the night which feels its way in the darkness and not the people. If this is the case, what do you think about those living in that night? Undoubtedly, they collide here and there. The Quran expresses this meaning, saying: ‘Or like utter darkness in the deep sea: there covers it a wave above which is another wave, above which is a cloud, (layers of) utter darkness one above another—when he holds

out his hand, he is almost unable to see it. And to whomsoever Allah does not give light, he has no light' (*an-Nur*: 40). How overwhelming this accumulating darkness is! It does not enable the man to see his own hand which is close to him and whose position he knows. If he cannot see it, then what about the other remote objects? This is how the ignorant people are wandering blindly in their ignorance.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And by the dawn that breathes softly' (*at-Takwir*: 18). The dawn time is full of activity and energy; it is as if it ends the burden of the night that wears the night out. It is as though the night compresses the breath and the dawn refreshes and returns it. This phenomenon is proven by the abundance of carbon dioxide in the air at night and the abundance of oxygen during the day, as a result of the process of photosynthesis.

All these are indications and allusions to the heavenly Messages, including that of Islam and the Messages that preceded it. The darkness refers to ignorance and the dawn refers to the coming of Islam with its light that filled the hearts through the coming of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with the Way of Guidance that caused the dawn of humanity to breathe.

Furthermore, we notice that Allah *the Almighty* does not swear here about the main pillar of faith, that is, His Existence as the Supreme Power that created the universe. This is despite the fact that it is He *Glorified is He* Who has revealed the Quran to the chosen Angelic Messenger. This is due to the fact that the matter of His Existence is unquestionable because it is entirely consistent with man's pure nature. The controversy may arise over the intermediaries that deliver the Message on Allah's behalf, and not over His Existence. That is why He *the Almighty* mentions the following as the complement of the oath: 'Truly this is the speech of a generous, noble Messenger' (*at-Takwir*: 19). This verse means that the Quran is the speech that the Archangel Jibril delivered intact to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

In this connection, we should note that the Quran is sometimes attributed to Allah *the Almighty* the Archangel Jibril or Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as the Lord *the Most High* says: '[That] indeed, the Quran is

the word of a generous, noble Messenger. And it is not the word of a poet' (*al-Haqqa*: 40-41). Scholars have explained that matter, saying, 'The action of revelation takes many stages; it is sometimes attributed to its origin, to the first intermediary, which is the trustworthy angel, or to the other intermediary, which is the trustworthy human being, namely Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*'.

We have explained this matter in our discussion of the action of taking the spirit. It is Allah *the Almighty* Who possesses that spirit and commands the angel to take it because He *the Almighty* does not undertake that action by Himself. Rather, it is the Angel of death who is charged with fulfilling this command and who takes the spirit. Moreover, that angel has followers and assistants. Thus, there are three stages in that action which is ultimately attributed to Allah's Command. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Allah takes the souls at the time of their death...' (*az-Zumar*: 42), and: 'Say, "The Angel of death appointed over you will take you"' (*as-Sajda*: 11), and: '...when death comes to one of you, Our Messengers take him...' (*al-An'am*: 61).

This matter is applicable to the Quran; it is Allah's Speech which the Lord *the Almighty* said, which is why it is attributed in reality to Him *Glorified is He*. It is also attributed to the Archangel Jibril because he is the first one to receive and convey it. For this reason it is also his speech. Furthermore, it is Prophet Muhammad's speech because he is the first human to receive it from the Archangel Jibril and convey it to the people.

If we carefully reflect on the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Truly this is the speech of a generous, noble Messenger' (*at-Takwir*: 19), we find that the word 'Messenger' refers to the Archangel Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*. A messenger is an intermediary between the sender and the recipient. The recipient has nothing to do with choosing the messenger; rather, it is the sender who chooses him. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...Allah is Most Knowing of where He places His Message...' (*al-An'am*: 124).

As long as the Messenger is chosen by his Lord, it could have been enough that Allah *the Almighty* describes him as a Messenger from Him *the Almighty* in order that we recognize his truthfulness. However, Allah *Glorified is He* adds: '...a generous, noble Messenger' (*at-Takwir*: 19). This is due to the fact

that the description of generosity in our human mind is a quality that makes the person give benevolently beyond what is required. That is, we should not say that the one who fulfils Allah's Right and that of the people is 'generous', for the one who possesses this quality of generosity should do more than that by offering supererogatory acts of worship, beyond what is obligatory. This quality indicates that the generous one loves the prescribed obligations and even does more supererogatory acts of worship. In fact, if he did not love giving people, he will not spend more than what is required.

In this connection, after receiving the religious obligations from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* a man said, 'By Allah, I will do neither more nor less [than this]'. Thereupon, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'He will be successful if he speaks the truth'.<sup>(1)</sup> Such a person does not deserve to be described as 'generous', because he will not do more than what is obligatory.

On the contrary, the generous one considers even giving the apple of his eye. This is similar to the case of Prophet Muhammad who was chosen by Allah *the Almighty* to bear the responsibility of delivering the Divine Way of Guidance to the people; he loves his mission and yearns to fulfil it perfectly.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Who possesses great strength and is held in honour by the Lord of the Throne' (*at-Takwir*: 20), it means that Jibril is not only generous and noble, but also strong. That is, in addition to

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(1) Talha ibn 'Ubaydullah narrated that a man from Najd with unkempt hair came to Prophet Muhammad and we heard his loud voice but could not understand what he was saying till he came near, and then we came to know that he was asking about Islam. Allah's Messenger said, 'You have to offer prayers perfectly five times in a day and night (24 hours)'. The man asked, 'Are there any more (Prayers)?' Prophet Muhammad replied, 'No, but if you want to offer supererogatory Prayers (you can)'. Allah's Messenger further said to him, 'You have to observe Fast during the month of Ramadan'. The man asked, 'Is there any more fasting?' Prophet Muhammad replied, 'No, but if you want to observe the supererogatory fasts (you can)'. Then Allah's Messenger further said to him, 'You have to pay the zakat (obligatory charity)'. The man asked, 'Is there anything other than zakat for me to pay?' Prophet Muhammad replied, 'No, unless you want to give alms of your own'. And then the man retreated, saying, 'By Allah! I will neither do less nor more than this'. Allah's Messenger said, 'If what he said is true, he will be successful (i.e. he will be granted Paradise)'. See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 46; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 8/11*.



the quality of generosity and nobility, he has power and high rank. When Allah *Glorified is He* describes one of His creatures as strong, this description is according to His Measure, and not the human one. In addition to all these qualities, he, that is Jibril, is described as being held in honour and high rank with Allah *the Almighty*.

Furthermore, he is described as being ‘... obeyed there and worthy of trust’ (*at-Takwir*: 21). This means that Archangel Jibril *peace be upon him* is obeyed by the angels in their supreme assembly. The angels in general ‘...do not disobey Allah in what He commands them, and do as they are commanded’ (*at-Tahrim*: 6). Their obedience to their leader is a part of their obedience to Allah *Glorified is He*. Not one of them fails to do his mission.

With regards to these qualities, there is a difference between the exegetes over the one described with them. Are they attributed to the chosen angelic Messenger or the chosen human one, that is Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? Those who attribute them to Archangel Jibril substantiate their argument by the fact that He *the Almighty* says after this: ‘Your companion is not mad’ (*at-Takwir*: 22). Furthermore, they say that Archangel Jibril is described with many qualities while Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is described by only a few. This proves Jibril’s superiority and high rank.

Other scholars maintain that all the qualities are attributed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and that he is superior with Allah *the Almighty* to Archangel Jibril *peace be upon him*. They support their argument by the fact that the chosen human Messenger is better than the angelic one because the latter, unlike the former, is obedient by nature.

Actually, we do not need to delve into this matter, as Allah *the Almighty* does not want us to make this comparison. This is because it is neither an essential nor a complementary part of the Creed, and the One Who knows such superiority and possesses its reward is Allah *Glorified is He*. As we do not possess the reward to give to the more superior one, what is the benefit of attributing superiority here?

The courteous way of talking about this issue is to discuss it generally, not specifically. For example, if we talk together about the scholars, we can say, ‘So-and-so is the most knowledgeable scholar among his people’, but we

should not say, 'He is more knowledgeable than so-and-so'. This is because specifying this point is difficult for the one who is inferior. Moreover, I think that in the Quran Allah *the Almighty* was respectful towards Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as He does not state that Archangel Jibril is superior to him *peace and blessings be upon him*. This issue does not need to be researched and has nothing to do with objectivity. Even if we assume this is the case, there is no need to draw any comparison between Jibril and Prophet Muhammad.

In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Nobody has the right to say that I am better than Yunus ibn Matta'.<sup>(1)</sup> Does this mean that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is not better than Yunus ibn Matta? We have said that attributing superiority to someone in a general manner is better than specifying it. That is why we say, 'Prophet Muhammad is the best Messenger', but we do not say, 'He is better than Yunus ibn Matta'. This is because this expression attributes inferiority to Yunus. This does not fit the position of a Messenger sent by Allah *the Almighty* especially since generalizing the speech delivers the same intended meaning. Thus, there is no need for a specified comparison. In other words, we should not say, 'Muhammad is better than 'Isa (Jesus) or Musa (Moses) *peace be upon them*', because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prohibited that comparison.

That is, we should refer to the general superiority in order to not lower a person by stating he is inferior in comparison to another. The reason is that gathering a person with other people, when comparing, makes the person easily accept a general comparison, as when we say, 'So-and-so is the most knowledgeable one among his people'. In this sentence, we confirmed his superiority in knowledge but did not lower anyone by specifying him as the inferior party of the two.

Scholars do not actually need to delve into the issue of comparing between Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and Archangel Jibril *peace be upon him*. This is due to the fact that the purpose of the verses is to reassure us that the authenticity of the Divine Way of Guidance that they conveyed is guaranteed by all the means that preserve its veracity and soundness. This is

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 3395 and 3413; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2377.*

because it is the speech of a generous, noble Messenger who possesses great strength and is held in honour by the Lord of the Throne. The description of ‘being held in honour’ removes all kinds of defects from him. Therefore, how perfect his trustworthiness is!

Although the scholars disagreed about the attribution of the previous qualities, they have agreed that the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Your companion is not mad’ (*at-Takwir*: 22) is attributed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It indicates that his truthfulness is recognized by his people. That is why they should trust his honesty in conveying the Message, as they have already acknowledged his honesty through their long experience of dealing with him *peace and blessings be upon him*.

These qualities can never be attributed to a mad person; that is why Allah *the Almighty* says in the chapter of *al-Qalam*: ‘Noon. I swear by the pen and what the angels write. By the grace of your Lord you are not mad. And most surely you shall have a reward never to be cut off. And most surely you are [a man] of great moral character’ (*al-Qalam*: 1-4). The great moral character refutes any accusation against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. So, his people’s claims that he is a sorcerer, a poet, a madman or a soothsayer are all rejected, as they used to call him before his Prophethood, ‘The truthful, honest person’. Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* refused his people’s offerings of kingship, sovereignty and wealth that they made in their attempt to tempt him to renounce his Message. Clearly, the claim that he is a madman was a collective demagoguery on the part of his people who had no proof to substantiate their claims.

We have previously illustrated the danger of blindly following the group in terms of their thinking and behaviour when we said that Allah *the Almighty* teaches us how to think, stating, ‘Say, “I only advise you of one [thing]—that you stand, for Allah’s sake, [seeking truth] in pairs and individually, and then think. Your companion is not possessed...”’ (*Saba’*: 46). He *Glorified is He* teaches us how to discuss our issues, to conduct a constructive dialogue, and to make the speaker be held accountable for his words.

Consequently, if the people of Mecca had sat in pairs or individually to think about the quality of madness and being possessed, they will have found

out that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is far removed from any madness. This is also applicable to the other qualities they accused him of, like being a poet, a sorcerer and a soothsayer. The accusations against him *peace and blessings be upon him* were easily refuted, but the disbelievers of Mecca were stubborn and obstinate, a fact which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘And they say, “If we follow the guidance with you, we will be forcibly uprooted from our land...”’ (*al-Qasas*: 57), and: ‘And when they said, “O Allah! If this is the Truth from You, then rain upon us stones from heaven or inflict on us a painful punishment”’ (*al-Anfal*: 32).

After this, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ بِالْأَفْقِ الْمُبِينِ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَمَا هُوَ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ بِضَنِينٍ ﴿٢٤﴾  
وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَيْطَانٍ رَجِيمٍ ﴿٢٥﴾ فَأَيْنَ تَذْهَبُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

**He did see him on the clear horizon [23] He does not withhold what is revealed to him from beyond [24] This is not the word of an outcast devil [25] So where are you [people] going? [26] (The Quran, *at-Takwir*: 23 - 26)**

When Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And without doubt he saw him on the clear horizon’ (*at-Takwir*: 23), He *Glorified is He* affirms that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had actually seen the Archangel Jibril (Gabriel) on the supreme horizon, that is the high heavens, during the Night Journey and Ascension.

With regards to the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘He does not withhold (*daneen*) what is revealed to him of the unseen’ (*at-Takwir*: 24), there are two standard ways of recitation for the word ‘*daneen*’; it is recited as ‘*dhaneen*’ and ‘*daneen*’, and both of them give a beneficial meaning. This verse means that as long as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was a companion of his people and they knew him to be an honest and truthful person, not one who was mad, then he is beyond suspicion. It is not expected that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* concealed, denied or withheld any part of the Divine Way of Guidance.

The other possible interpretation, if the word '*dhaneen*' is considered, is that the revelation is neither a delusion nor Prophet Muhammad's speech to himself, as some people claim, saying, 'The revelation is a mental image that Muhammad imagines and then utters to himself'. In other words, they claim that he *peace and blessings be upon him* suffers a dual personality, one of Muhammad and another of Jibril. This accusation is refuted by the first verse revealed in the Quran: 'Read in the name of your Lord Who created' (*al-'Alaq*: 1). This verse entails two separate personalities: one that commands and one that is commanded. The first, consistent with his capacity, commands the second to read, while the second, also consistent with his ability and the causal factors of one that has never recited before, cannot recite. These two personalities cannot merge into one personality at the same time.

Thus, the truth is the revelation came down to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* through Archangel Jibril *peace be upon him*. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And without doubt he saw him on the clear horizon' (*at-Takwir*: 23). This affirms the reality of the encounter that happened between them. Furthermore, the verse affirms that the revelation is not Prophet Muhammad's speech to himself. In fact, Allah *the Almighty* made Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* see Archangel Jibril in his real image despite Jibril usually being unseen and Prophet Muhammad usually not being able to see an angel due to the Prophet being a human. However, this was meant to refute the claim that the revelation is just speech which Prophet Muhammad said to himself.

Seeing Angel Jibril *peace be upon him* in his real form made the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* fully realise that he was before another separate power that has a distinctive form. With regards to this, we know that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw Jibril in different images, but saw him in his real form only twice. The first time took place on the Night Journey and Ascension at the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary. The other time was on earth. Concerning this, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And he certainly saw him in another descent. At the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary' (*an-Najm*: 13-14).

The Lord *Glorified is He* made Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* see Jibril in his real form so that he recognizes the source from which

he will receive the revelation. This assured Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that the revelation was neither a delusion nor just speech or thoughts to himself, but rather a revelation brought down by a separate power with a distinctive form, namely the Archangel Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* realized this fact, he felt assured that what was descending on him was revelation.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'This is not the word of an outcast devil' (*at-Takwir*: 25), it refutes the possibility that the revelation was the word of a cursed devil. This is because there were some occasions when the devils used to eavesdrop<sup>(1)</sup> on the heaven and then convey what they had heard to their followers from among evil human beings, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...surely the devils suggest to their friends that they should contend with you; and if you obey them, you shall most surely be polytheists' (*al-An'am*: 121). Thus, this possibility was imprinted on people's minds. Moreover, the revelation that was sent down on Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* condemns Satan as an enemy. This is why that revelation can never come from the devils, as they cannot declare war against themselves. Clearly, if the revelation were the word of a devil, it will, at least, avert talking about our enmity towards Satan. However, as the revelation talks badly about Satan, as declared plainly in many verses, then: 'This is not the word of an outcast devil' (*at-Takwir*: 25).

After this, Allah *the Almighty* poses the following question: 'So where are you [people] going?' (*at-Takwir*: 26) After confirming the authenticity of the revelation, Allah *Glorified is He* shows the people the precautionary measures that guarantee their safety. Allah *the Almighty* restricts the means of safety and salvation, saying to them, 'There is no way for you except to follow your Lord and Creator's Way of Guidance. And the only way to follow is to believe Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in what he conveys

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(1) *A Hadith to that effect is narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him. It reads, 'The devils used to eavesdrop on the heaven and when one of them came with a word of truth, he used to add seventy lies to it with which he earned the hearts of the people'. This Hadith has been authenticated by Al-Hakim and Adh-Dhaabi agreed with him about its authenticity. See Al-Hakim, Mustadrak, Hadith no. 3050; and Al-Bayhaqi, Ma'rifat As-Sunna Wa Al-'Athar, Hadith no. 20867.*

from Jibril, who received the revelation from Allah *Glorified is He*. Thus, do not try to take another way, for there is no other way you can follow to be saved’.

That is, His saying: ‘So where are you [people] going?’ (*at-Takwir*: 26) means that there is only one way they can follow to be saved. This expression is said only about the person whose ways of reaching his destination are blocked except for one. It is as if there is only one answer to that question: ‘We have no other way’. Allah *the Almighty* does not affirm this fact using the imperative form, but rather by using a question containing a fact that can only be affirmed by the one addressed. The answer to that question serves as an argument against the people.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ لِمَنْ شَاءَ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ يَسْتَقِيمَ ﴿٢٨﴾  
وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

**This is a message for all people [27] for those who wish  
to take the straight path [28] But you will only wish to  
do so by the will of God, the Lord of all people [29]  
(The Quran, *at-Takwir*: 27 - 29)**

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘This is a reminder for all people’ (*at-Takwir*: 27) means that the Quran is nothing but a reminder for all the people and creatures. The word ‘reminder’ directs our attention to our past and pure nature on which we were created. This is because this word in question means that man used to remember something but then forgot it; this matter is the Divine Way of Guidance. The Quran reminds us about it because man originally received Allah’s Way of Guidance at the time of Adam. We have explained this fact which is found in His saying: ‘And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them testify concerning their own souls, “Am I not your Lord?” They said, “Yes! We do testify”. Lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, “Surely, we were heedless of this”. Or you should say, “Only our fathers before us associated others (with Allah), and we were their descendants after them: Will you then destroy us for what the followers of falsehood did?’ (*al-A’raf*: 172-173)

This is man's natural disposition: man is religious by nature and faith is an innate inclination in him. However, as time passes, people forget this original nature and abandon this innateness. Thereupon, Allah *the Almighty* sends Messengers to remind them about their pure nature and take them back to the Divine Way of Guidance. Here, we should refer to the fact that some people have a superficial overview about the Quran. Such people ask, 'As long as the people have given that testimony and acknowledged that matter, how did they differ afterwards? How did they divert from Allah's Way of Guidance?' We say, 'This is because Allah *Glorified is He* made them bear witness that He is their Lord, and they acknowledged that fact. He did not make them bear witness to His Divinity. This is due to the fact that His Lordship is not questioned, it affects everyone and, therefore, no one denies it'.

But after acknowledging that fact and recognizing that Allah is their Lord and Creator, Who is in charge of managing their affairs, providing them with sustenance and educating them, the people should have not glorified any other object of worship. Furthermore, they should have neither diverted from His Way of Guidance nor obeyed anyone else. This is because it is foolish to believe in the Lord but obey someone else. Thus, the difference over Allah's Divinity between the people stemmed from the fact that they did not bear witness to His Divinity but rather to His Lordship.

As long as faith is natural and well-established in the soul, it should have been transmitted from the predecessors to the successive generations, as many affairs of life have come to us through our forefathers. For example, they transmitted the way of kneading wheat and what is needed for this, including wheat, water and yeast. Also, they conveyed the way of baking it in the oven, what we should do if the dough does not rise and so on. Hence, why were the religion and the Way of Guidance not transmitted to us throughout the generations like these affairs of life? The reason is that the Way of Guidance constrains man's life and his desires, and the soul finds these constraints repulsive and thus tries to overstep them. At that point, forgetfulness about the religious requirements and the Way of Guidance take place.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...to whoever among you who wills to take the straight path' (*at-Takwir*: 28), it denotes that this 'reminder'



does not avail anyone except the seekers of the Straight Path who are ready to bear its difficulties. This means that it is the people who should seek and ask for the reminder, not the other way around. They should believe that it is the way of reformation for their worldly life and their salvation in the Hereafter.

That is why we have said that the Quran is one, but its recipients are different, as Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Say, “It is to those who believe a guidance and a healing; but (as for) those who do not believe, there is a deafness in their ears and it is obscure to them...”’ (*Fussilat*: 44). This means the matter is all about being ready to listen and wanting to accept; that is why Allah *the Almighty* attributes a special will to the people, saying: ‘...to whoever among you who wills to take the straight path’ (*at-Takwir*: 28). In fact, the Quran does not force the people to believe in it; rather, it is a Way of Guidance that offers itself to people’s hearts. If it is received with a pure intention and a readiness to listen, it enters the heart; otherwise, it is rejected.

In the same connection, we have seen that many non-Muslim scholars, philosophers and geniuses embraced Islam when they read the Quran and found therein the truth that they were searching for. It is a reminder for the seekers of the Straight Path. Such people will inevitably find this path in the Quran. By contrast, the heedless one who receives the Quran without being ready to listen and with being heedful will not benefit from it.

How strange man’s attitude towards Allah’s Religion is! When he suffers any pain in his body, he goes to the doctor and takes the medicine and analgesics to get rid of the pain. Moreover, he is keen on not missing any benefit or material gain in his worldly life. But on the other hand, he is heedless about the religious affairs and misses the prayer frequently without suffering any spiritual pain. Why do the worldly interests preoccupy us and distract us from pursuing the Way of happiness in the Hereafter? For example, we are concerned about students and provide them with private tuition, and exert great efforts for them to earn high marks and join good colleges. Meanwhile, we do not ask them if they are constant in their prayers.

What is the reason for this? It is because we do not want to comply with Allah’s Way of Guidance or constrain ourselves by its rulings. In fact, the one who wants something will seek the means of obtaining it, as the soul tries to

get what it desires. By contrast, if one wants to neglect something or forget about it, he will just find some excuses and pretexts for such negligence. Imagine, for example, that the Ministry of Supply announced that it will change the ration cards; all the people will queue up before the windows of the offices affiliated to that Ministry.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'But you will not will to do so except by the will of Allah, the Lord of all the people' (*at-Takwir*: 29), it proves that man's will is not independent, for it is subjected to Allah's Will and stems from it. Therefore, the slave should not wish something except if it is in accordance with Allah's Will. That is why the verse is concluded with His saying: '...the Lord of all the people' (*at-Takwir*: 29). Allah *Glorified is He* is man's Lord, Creator, Provider, Educator and Protector. Furthermore, He *the Almighty* is in full charge of all man's affairs. Thus one's will is subjected to that of Allah *the Almighty*. This is a fact and the true meaning of the verse.

If man ponders on his life, he finds himself free to act as he wants for some matters and coerced for some others. Likewise, there are matters known to him and others not apparent to him. Similarly, one's will is neither absolute nor limited. But why did Allah *the Almighty* make it that way? Scholars believe that this means that absolute Power belongs to Him *the Almighty* and not to the human being; Allah *Glorified is He* limits his will in matters in which he has no freedom to choose, but these matters are not part of the religious obligations. As for matters related to the religious obligations, like prayer, *zakat*, fasting and pilgrimage, they, out of Allah's Justice, do not fall under the category of limited freedom. Thus, man has freedom to do or not to do them.

In fact, Allah's Attributes have a particular scope in which they are applied with regards to human beings and the universe. His Attributes of Being Irresistible, and His Attributes of Mercy, Omnipotence and Justice are a case in point. If the Attribute of Omnipotence were applied on all the creatures, it will prevent the Attribute of Justice from fulfilling its part. That is, if one says that Allah *the Almighty* forced him to abandon prayer, he will refute His Attribute of Justice.

When we review the verses of the Glorious Quran related to the matter of Allah's Will and its relation to man's will, we find that they state two

meanings; every one of them refers to a particular part of the will. For example, He *the Almighty* says: ‘...Allah makes Whom He pleases err and guides aright Whom He pleases...’ (*Fatir*: 8), as well as: ‘...so let him who pleases believe, and let him who pleases disbelieve...’ (*al-Kahf*: 29), and in this verse: ‘...to whoever among you who wills to take the straight path. But you will not will to do so except by the will of Allah, the Lord of all the people’ (*at-Takwir*: 28-29).

Clearly, Allah *Glorified is He* has a Will and the human being also has a will, and they are not, in reality, contradictory. When we find a verse talking about man’s free will, we should look for the verse that denotes that his will is restricted, resulting in the latter refuting the absoluteness of the former. Allah *the Almighty* makes the human being coerced and subjected in some matters to His Supreme Will that allows no other will. However, he has a freedom of choice and a free will in other matters that originally stem from His Will; if He *the Almighty* had willed, He could have made the human being totally coerced, without any freedom of choice or free will at all. However, according to His Will, He *Glorified is He* made him able to do or not to do the religious obligations. Does man like this fact or not? It depends if he has Belief or not.



the chapter of

***al-Infitar***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Infitar*<sup>(1)</sup>

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انْفَطَرَتْ ﴿١﴾ وَإِذَا الْكَوَاكِبُ انْتَرَتْ ﴿٢﴾ وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ فُجِرَتْ ﴿٣﴾  
وَإِذَا الْقُبُورُ بُعِثَتْ ﴿٤﴾ عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ وَأَخَّرَتْ ﴿٥﴾

**When the sky is torn apart [1] when the stars are scattered [2]  
when the seas burst forth [3] when graves turn inside out [4]  
each soul will know what it has done and what it has left  
undone [5] (The Quran, *al-Infitar*: 1-5)**

Allah (God)<sup>(2)</sup> *the Almighty* uses the root ‘f’, ‘t’, ‘r’ to refer to both a constructed or a destructed object. The example of the former is His saying: ‘...the Originator (*fatir*) of the heavens and the earth...’ (*Fatir*: 1), using the word ‘*fatir*’ (originator) which is derived from the root ‘f’, ‘t’, ‘r’. This verse means that Allah *Glorified is He* has precisely and powerfully created the heavens and the earth without any previous pattern. By contrast, Allah *the Almighty* mentions something that is destructed in this verse under discussion, saying: ‘When the sky breaks apart (*anfatarat*)’ (*al-Infitar*: 1). He *Glorified is He* warns the people against the mightiest calamity that will cause the sky to break apart

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- (1) The chapter of *al-Infitar*, counting 19 verses, is number 82 in the order of the Quran. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *al-Inshiqaq* and before that of *ar-Rum*.
- (2) The Islamic concept of ‘Allah’ is not the same as the Christian and Jewish concept of ‘God’. However, the word ‘Allah’ does not refer to a tribal god or the God of only Muslims; it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use ‘Allah’ rather than ‘God’ as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.

and the planets to fall down. At that time, they will stop doing their functions because Allah *the Almighty* removes what used to make them sound.

The Arabic word '*al-infitar*', which is derived from the word '*anfatarat*', means to break apart and crack; a meaning which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '[And] who created seven heavens in layers. You do not see in the creation of the Most Merciful any inconsistency. So return [your] vision [to the sky]; do you see any cracks (*futoor*)?' (*al-Mulk*: 3) Out of His Perfect Omnipotence, Allah *the Almighty* gives the creatures the power they need to fulfil their function. But although He *Glorified is He* endows them with that power, no one should think that any creature can go beyond the Creator's Omnipotence. The Lord *Glorified is He* created the heavens and the earth wonderfully, perfectly and precisely. Moreover, He *the Almighty* is fully Able to tear them apart, rendering them unsound, at any time He wants. Likewise, the Lord *Glorified is He* is fully Able to cause the sun to be shrouded in darkness, the stars to become dimmed and the mountains to be removed.

One scholar once said, 'I did not understand the meaning of the word '*fatar*' ('to originate' or 'to create') except when a Bedouin said to me, 'So-and-so claims the ownership of a well that I '*fatartuha*' (originally dug)'. Thus, describing Allah *Glorified is He* as the Originator of the heavens and the earth means that He *the Almighty* created them without any previous pattern.

With regards to breaking the sky apart, Allah *the Almighty* mentions this fact in the Quran in a number of verses: 'When the sky breaks apart' (*al-Infitar*: 1), and: 'When the sky splits apart' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 1). It does not break apart or split apart due to its own volition; rather, it does so in accordance with its Lord's Command. For this reason, He *the Almighty* says: 'When the sky splits apart, obeying its Lord as it rightly must' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 1-2). These two verses clearly show that once the sky hears Allah's Command to split apart, it immediately obeys that command. This incident will take place on the Day of Judgment. These verses indicate that the sky obeys that command immediately after hearing it, as it heeds the command of its Lord Who created it. It does not only hear the command but also carries it out upon its issuance without any delay whatsoever. The human beings can obey or disobey Allah's Commands, while the sky obeys them as soon as they are given.



The sky breaks apart only because of a momentous matter, that is, the mighty events of the Day of Judgment and the end of the worldly life. The breaking apart of the sky is mentioned in regard to another mighty matter about which Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘They say, “The Beneficent Allah has taken (to Himself) a son”’. Certainly you have made an abominable assertion. At it the heavens almost break apart (*yatafatarna*), the earth splits apart, and the mountains fall down in pieces, that they ascribe a son to the Most Gracious. And it is not worthy of the Most Gracious that He should take (for Himself) a son. There is no one in the heavens and the earth but will come to the Most Gracious as a slave’ (*Maryam*: 88-93).

This shows us the hideous crime of those who ascribe a son to Allah *the Almighty*. Its heinousness is so serious that the sky, out of great fear of this claim, may almost break apart and fall into tiny pieces.

Allah *the Almighty* then says in the verse under discussion: ‘When the stars scatter’ (*al-Infitar*: 2). He *the Almighty* refers to the stars which are worshiped by some people, to tell those worshippers that their objects of worship will become disordered and that they will leave their orbits that they used to float in. Those worshippers will be unable to see these stars anymore because they will disappear after the sky breaks apart. If these stars had been able to benefit anyone, they will have been benefited themselves by remaining in their orbits. If such worshippers carefully reflected on this matter, they will start to ask themselves, ‘Who placed the stars in their orbits?!’

The word ‘planet’ refers to a celestial body whose light is derived from another source, that is the sun. This means when the sun sets, we do not see the planets. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says about Ibrahim (Abraham): ‘And thus did We show Ibrahim (Abraham) the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, that he might be of those who are sure. So when the night over-shadowed him, he saw a star; he said, “Is this my Lord?” But when it set, he said, “I do not love those that set”. Then when he saw the moon rising, he said, “Is this my Lord?” And when it set, he said, “Unless my Lord guides me, I will certainly be [among] those who are astray”. Then when he saw the sun rising, he said, “Is this my Lord? Is this the greatest [of all]?” But when it set, he said, “O my people! Surely, I am clear of what you set up (with Allah)”’ (*al-An‘am*: 75-78).

These verses definitely prove that all the stars—even the sun—will ultimately come to an end. Prophet Ibrahim made his people logically conclude that worshipping the stars is not sound. In other words, he used logic to prove his argument that the stars cannot be deities.

Scattering is the antithesis of collecting, as when one throws an object on the ground and it breaks into scattered fragments. Therefore, the stars will be scattered, leaving their celestial positions and leaving their orbits. After the law of gravity, upon which the work of the entire solar system is based, ceases to function properly, the stars will move disorderly in space.

The saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘When the seas are made to burst forth’ (*al-Infitar*: 3), is similar to His saying: ‘When the seas are made to boil over’ (*at-Takwir*: 3). These are future signs that will happen on the Day of Judgment. The seas will burst forth and become one sea, so the sweet water will mix with the salty one. This is because linguistically, the word ‘sea’ refers to a massive quantity of water, be it sweet or salty, collected in one place. Another possible meaning is that the sea water will cease to exist, so the seas will dry up. Some scholars, like Al-Kalbi, held the position that the verse means that the seas’ water will overflow. So their water will spread over the surface of the earth, as Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘When the seas are made to boil over’ (*at-Takwir*: 3). The overflowing or boiling seas are those whose water will cease to exist on the Day of Judgment, rendering the seas empty of water.

With regards to the saying of Allah: ‘When graves are turned upside down’ (*al-Infitar*: 3), it means that the graves will be laid open and their contents will be scattered. So they will turn upside down and the dead people will come out of them. At that time, they will hastily come out of their graves, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘The day on which they shall come forth from their graves in haste, as if they were rushing to a goal’ (*al-Ma’arij*: 43). In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...when lo! From their graves they shall rush forth to their Lord’ (*Ya Sin*: 51).

They will come forth out of their graves hastily, like scattered locusts, as Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Their eyes cast down, going forth from their graves as if they were scattered locusts’ (*al-Qamar*: 7). They will come out, saying: ‘...O woe to us! Who has raised us up from our sleeping-place?’ (*Ya Sin*: 52)

They wrongly thought that the grave was their final resting place and that there is neither Resurrection nor Account. But lo! They will come out of their graves and fully realize the reality of the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment that they used to belie and deny in the worldly life. At that difficult time, they will say: ‘...This is what the Most Gracious promised and the apostles told the truth’ (*Ya Sin*: 52). Surprisingly, they, at that particular time, mention Allah *the Almighty* by His Name: the Most Gracious; it is as if they invoke Him for Mercy because they came to know for sure that nothing but His Mercy will save them on that Day. If Allah *Glorified is He* deals with them according to His Due Right of Divinity, He will punish them because they did not bring forward any good deeds for their salvation in the Hereafter. Rather, they disbelieved and committed sins and evil deeds.

For this reason, the Lord *the Almighty* then says: ‘Each soul will know what it has done and what it has left undone’ (*al-Infitar*: 5). This verse means that every person will know the good and the evil deeds that he has done, as well as the good deeds that he left undone or delayed to later. That is when the sky will break apart, the stars will be scattered, the seas will burst forth and the graves will turn upside down; every soul will know the good, righteous deeds and the evil, bad ones that it has done.

In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says in another verse: ‘And the Book [of deeds] shall be placed. Then you will see the guilty in great terror because of what is in it; they will say, “Ah! Woe to us! What a book is this! It does not omit anything small or great but it takes account of it (all)”’. And what they had done they shall find present (there); and your Lord does not deal unjustly with anyone’ (*al-Kahf*: 49).

By reading its book of record, the soul will realize that everything, be it small or great, good or bad, is recorded therein. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and We will bring forth to him on the Resurrection Day a book which he will find wide open. [It will be said to him], “Read your book; your own self is sufficient as a reckoner against you this day”’ (*al-Isra*’: 13-14). This means that every human being will find his deeds recorded and written down in a book. At that time, denial and disputation are useless, for one’s book of deeds is an argument against him. Moreover, 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).

Next, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ مَا غَرَكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ ۖ (٦) الَّذِي خَلَقَكَ فَسَوَّدَكَ  
فَعَدَلَكَ (٧) فِي أَيِّ صُورَةٍ مَا شَاءَ رَكَّبَكَ (٨)

**Mankind, what has lured you away from God [6]  
your generous Lord, who created you, shaped you,  
proportioned you [7] in whatever form He chose [8]  
(The Quran, *al-Infitar*: 6 - 8)**

These verses refer to man’s heedlessness of the Day of Judgment and his ignorance of the preliminary measures that he should take in preparation for that Day—the most important of which is having piety. As a matter of fact, Allah *the Almighty* expresses this meaning using one word, namely ‘*al-ghurur*’ (allurement and deception), saying: ‘O man, what has lured you away from Allah, your generous Lord’ (*al-Infitar*: 6). The question here carries the meaning of amazement and is also a reproach directed at the man who dares to violate Allah’s due Position by rebelling against Him and committing sins while Allah *the Almighty* is his Generous Lord Who should not be disobeyed.

Allah *the Almighty* addresses man by his quality of being a human, saying ‘O man...’ (*al-Infitar*: 6). This quality alludes that man’s humanity should have deterred him against being deceived and self-conceited, because the only quality that distinguishes man from animals is the mind, which is the means of thought, reflection and deduction. If he had employed his mind and respected the fact that he is a human, he will not have been allured and deceived by anything. Furthermore, nothing will have distracted him from his Lord. Deception denotes the deceived person’s heedlessness of his true position with regards to the objects by which he is deceived. Moreover, he should not have forgotten his weakness and need for the Power of his Lord Who created him; however, he was allured away from Him. If he wants to be self-conceited, he should be conceited about something intrinsic within himself, not by

something he was a given. Worse still, he has been deceived concerning his Lord. As we have said, Lordship is a quality of bestowing, gifting and giving without waiting for anything in return. Consequently, how indecent it is to be deceived concerning the Lord!

This is why Allah *the Almighty* uses the condemnatory question: ‘O man, what has lured you away from Allah, your generous Lord?’ (*al-Infitar*: 6), which expresses amazement and is also a reproach. What incited man to be deceived concerning Allah *the Almighty*?! It could be justifiable that he be deceived concerning anything except Allah, the All-Generous, Who bestowed His Blessings on him. Therefore, there is no single justification for falling into that prohibited matter.

Allah *Glorified is He* uses the Attribute: ‘...Generous Lord’ (*al-Infitar*: 6) to clarify that man has been deceived concerning something precious that should not be dealt with in that way. If it had been a trivial thing, we could have said that man’s soul incited him to be deceived. All the proofs thus clearly state that such a deceived one is heedless of his state of being a humane and his Lord’s Due Position.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* enumerates some of His Blessings and manifestations of His Generosity, saying: ‘Who created you, shaped you, proportioned you...’ (*al-Infitar*: 7). This verse mentions three stages in the creation of man: bringing into existence, fashioning and proportioning. No one doubts these stages when he looks at his shape, constitution and uprightness. Allah *the Almighty* did not make man move on his belly like snakes, or on four feet like the cattle; rather, He *the Almighty* made him symmetrical and upright.

This is in relation to just the outer form of man’s body, not to mention the proportionality and the symmetry of the subtle biological systems inside his body. Scientists keep discovering new wonders and secrets related to the creation and origination of these systems. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says after this: ‘He constituted you in whatever form He chose’ (*al-Infitar*: 8). This verse means that Allah *the Almighty* made man in the best form and the most wonderful image.

Then the Lord *the Most High* says:

كَلَّا بَلْ تُكَذِّبُونَ بِالَّذِينَ ﴿٩﴾ وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحَافِظِينَ ﴿١٠﴾  
 كِرَامًا كُنِينٍ ﴿١١﴾ يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

**Yet you still take the Judgment to be a lie [9] Over you stand [10] watchers, noble recorders [11] who know what you do [12] (The Quran, *al-Infitar*: 9 - 12)**

Here, Allah *the Almighty* tells us that He wants to forgive such a man because He *Glorified is He* is the Benevolent and the Bestower of all Blessings. For this reason He *the Almighty* has the right to forgive whomever He chooses because man's sin in this world is one of the means of educating him. As Allah *Glorified is He* is the Lord Who gives, bestows and is in charge of man's education, then He *the Almighty* says: 'Yet you still take the Judgment to be a lie!' (*al-Infitar*: 9) Here, the Arabic word '*kalla*', which comes at the beginning of the verse, is a particle denoting determent and reproach for what precedes it, that is, man's deception concerning his Lord. It shows that such a deception should not have taken place.

The verses clarify the reason for this reproach, that is, man being deceived concerning Allah *the Almighty* while He *Glorified is He* has endowed him with qualities that protect him from falling into sin. How can this deception happen concerning Allah, the Lord, the Creator, the Fashioner, the Giver and the Most Generous?! Thus, mans should not have dared to be deceived concerning his Lord *Glorified is He*. Furthermore, when Allah *the Almighty* reproaches His slave for this deception, He *the Almighty* fulfils man's right to be advised, educated and guided. However, man may be deterred by this reproach or not—that is another question.

That is why Allah *the Almighty* says in another verse: 'But man exceeds all bounds, when he thinks he is self-sufficient' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7). Indeed, one of man's qualities entails overstepping the limits and transgressing, especially because he mistakenly thinks that what he possesses is sufficient for him. Consequently, he becomes self-conceited, thinking that he is a natural part of this universe. Yet, he did not witness Allah's Creative Power when He *Glorified is He* created, fashioned and provided him. Accordingly, he wrongly thought that these matters are normal facts of nature, and, therefore, was

allured away from Allah *the Almighty* by these causal factors. In other words, being deceived by these causal factors means that he was distracted from the Ultimate Causer, that is Allah *Glorified is He*.

As such, in the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* deters the people against this deception and self-conceitedness, but most people are actually undeterred in this regard. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And certainly some narratives have come to them that contain a deterrent: A far-reaching wisdom—but warnings do not avail [them]’ (*al-Qamar*: 4-5). After this reproach, Allah *the Almighty* says in the verse under discussion: ‘Yet you still take the Judgment to be a lie!’ (*al-Infitar*: 9) The Arabic word ‘*bal*’, which comes near the beginning of this verse, is a particle that denotes leaving what was mentioned before it and paying attention to what follows it. The meaning is thus that beside the point that most people are undeterred and keep on rejecting Belief in Allah *the Almighty*, they are also heedless of the signs manifested in the Universe and the signs found inside them. If they had reflected on these signs, they will have never belied the Day of Resurrection and the Account.

We notice here that the Quranic style first addresses the human being in the singular, but then the address is directed in the plural, the pronoun ‘you’ being in the plural in the verse: ‘Yet you still take the Judgment to be a lie!’ (*al-Infitar*: 9) Scholars have said, ‘This is due to the fact that the word ‘man’ is a genus encompassing all his species. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is saying, “O all human beings”. That is, the singular form, man, in this context denotes plural’. That is why the verses then use the plural form of ‘you’, reading: ‘Yet you still take the Judgment to be a lie!’ (*al-Infitar*: 9) This style is also used in the chapter of *al-‘Asr* where Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘I swear by time, most surely man is in loss’ (*al-‘Asr*: 1-2). Then He *Glorified is He* makes the exception, saying: ‘Except those who believe...’ (*al-‘Asr*: 3). In this chapter the plural form ‘those who believe’ was excluded from the singular form ‘man’. The rule of exception states that the excepted objects should be fewer than the general ones from which they were excluded. However, the word ‘man’ denotes all mankind, even if it is singular.

Therefore, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Yet you still take the Judgment to be a lie!’ (*al-Infitar*: 9) reminds all the people that they neither

complied by being deterred from being deceived nor stopped their evil deeds. This is because they belied the Day of Account and Recompense, which is the cause of every sin, heedlessness, violation of the Divine Way of Guidance and being unprepared for this Day's imminent coming. If they had believed in that Day, they will not have violated the Way of Guidance and followed another man-made path. That is why we have said that Belief depends mainly on two pillars: the supreme pillar of believing in Allah *the Almighty* and belief in the Last Day. In other words, it depends on belief in the Supreme Creator and also the final destination of all.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'Over you stand watchers' (*al-Infitar*: 10). As denial of the Day of Recompense or being doubtful about it is the cause of heedlessness and violating Allah's Way of Guidance, Allah *Glorified is He* reminds people that He records all their deeds. Allah *the Almighty* causes their deeds to be written down in order to hold them to account on the Day of Judgment when every soul will be recompensed for its deeds. In order for Allah *Glorified is He* to establish the argument against the people, the deeds that they are held accountable for must be recorded in order for their doers to read them. Here, Allah *the Almighty* wants to affirm this fact, saying: 'Over you stand watchers, noble recorders' (*al-Infitar*: 10-11). These verses refer to the angels who record the slaves' deeds and write them down.

Concerning this, Allah *the Almighty* also says: 'He utters not a word but there is by him a watcher at hand' (*Qaf*: 18). The deeds are recorded because the people, with regard to documentation, only depend on and have confidence in recorded matters, which avert any doubt, heedlessness or forgetfulness. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is saying to the people, 'As documentation is familiar to you in the worldly life, I have documented and recorded your deeds'.

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* uses the effect, that is, the angels' recording of deeds, as a proof for the cause, that is, the existence of the Day of Judgment. This is because the first unseen matter, that is the angels' recording of deeds, has come to pass, while the second unseen matter, that is the Day of Judgment, has not come to pass yet. The first matter is a reality but we neither see it nor know how it is carried out or by what means it is done.



Being unknowledgeable about these details is not harmful to us; what is important is that this unseen matter is real and happens right now, even if it is unperceivable to us and beyond our intellectual abilities. We have previously explained that there is a difference between the existence of an object and our perception of it; the perception of something is not proof of its existence, for we do not perceive many things that exist. Moreover, if something is unperceivable, this does not mean it does not exist, as many objects used to be unperceivable but recently they became perceivable when Allah *the Almighty* willed to reveal them through scientific advancement. When the minds were employed, these unperceivable things became visible; thus, they already existed even if we did not use to see them.

It is as if Allah *the Almighty* has placed in the unseen tangible matters in our worldly life as proof of His Truthfulness in His News about the unseen Hereafter. When He *the Almighty* tells us something, we must believe Him. In fact, all the scientific discoveries serve as a form of reassurance for the mind in order for it to accept the reality of unseen matters. If one ponders on his mind, with its limited size, he finds that it can recall a situation, a sentence or a word that was issued tens of years ago. It can recall them because they are stored inside him. When they are recalled, it is as if they are happening at the moment. But how can the human mind store all these details? Moreover, how does it recall them? It is a wondrous matter that one's mind records his deeds. This is more amazing than the fact that two angels are recording them.

We have also said that Belief is irrelevant to tangible matters, for they are not the field of Belief. That is to say that one does not say, 'I believe I am sitting or talking to you'. This is because these matters are tangible and have nothing to do with Belief. In fact, Belief is related to the unseen matters that are beyond our perception but about which Allah *the Almighty* has told us. For example, we say, 'We believe in the truthfulness of the Account, the Recompense, Hell and Paradise'.

As such, with regards to unseen matters that Allah *Glorified is He* has told us about, it is enough to think about them but not try to imagine them. That is why the scholars say, 'How much the minds are astray depends on the extent of their imagination'. In the same connection, we have previously explained

that the philosophers went astray only when they transcended reasoning to imagination. The ancient philosophers reflected on matter and found that it could not be self-existent, which is why they firmly believed that there should be someone behind it. Although this is enough reasoning, they brought troubles on themselves and the people by trying to imagine metaphysical ideas. If they had confined themselves to the stage of reasoning, their problem will have been solved.

In the chapter under discussion Allah *the Almighty* wants to tell us that the matter of recording the deeds is not purposeless; rather, it is purposeful as man's deeds are written down with meticulous accuracy, carefulness and honesty. He *the Almighty* guaranteed such honesty by charging angels with this mission. They are described as being watchful, noble recorders who know what we do. Consequently, their documentation of people's deeds must be accurate and identical to what they have done. After this recording of the deeds, there will be the Account, Recompense, Reward and Punishment for them. As the Lord *the Almighty* does not wrong His slaves even by as much as an atom's weight, He *Glorified is He* assigned the recording of the deeds to the angels who are not prone to error, forgetfulness, inattention or heedlessness.

These four qualities of the recorders are meaningful; they are watchful over the deeds and write them down. Furthermore, they are noble, which entails being pleased about good and disturbed by evil. This means their nature fits the mission they were charged with. Once they see the slave has done a good deed, they hastily write it down, as they like these kind of deeds. Likewise, when they see a bad deed, they hastily record it because they hate it and feel sad it was committed. We can see there is a mission and an inner preparation for fulfilling it. These angels have a limited mission and are naturally prepared to fulfil it perfectly. In fact, one does not perfectly fulfil a mission without a spiritual preparation for it. Were the angels naturally unprepared for that mission, their standards will have been different.

We should reflect on the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...recorders' (*al-Infitar*: 11). They are not only noble watchers but also recorders; they do not only memories the deeds but also corroborate their memorization by recording. Such memorization will be employed when the angels bear witness

concerning the people's deeds. As for the recording, it will be an argument against the doer of the deeds on a Day when these records will be spread open and it will be said: 'Read your book; your own self is sufficient as a reckoner against you this Day' (*al-Isra'*: 14). To conclude, the deeds are memorized by the angels and recorded in the books or records.

Likewise, we have said that the Quran is called by this name because it is recited; it is a verbal noun of the word '*qara*' (to read). In order to be preserved, the Quran should not only be preserved by being written down but also by being recited. For example, the letters '*alif*', '*lam*' and '*mim*' should be read separately in the chapter of *al-Baqara* but jointly as the word '*alm*' in the chapter of *ash-Sharh* wherein Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Did We not (*alam*) relieve your heart for you [Prophet]?' (*ash-Sharh*: 1) If the matter of preservation only concerned the Quran being written down, the pronunciation of these two words will be similar.

Out of Allah's Mercy on us, He *Glorified is He* made the recorder of the good deeds the master of the recorder of the evil ones in order that man be given a chance to repent and return to the Right Way. This is due to the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* does not search for our faults but rather for our good deeds.

Concerning this, it is reported that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Whosoever intended to perform a good deed but did not do it, Allah writes it down with Himself as a complete good deed. And if he intended to perform it and then performed it, then Allah writes it down with Himself as ten good deeds up to seven hundred, or up to many times multiplied. And if he intended to perform an evil deed but did not do it, Allah writes it down with Himself as a complete good deed. And if he intended to perform it [i.e., the evil deed] and then performed it, Allah writes it down as one evil deed'.<sup>(1)</sup> Clearly, the action with Allah *the Almighty* depends on the intention of the heart. Man's heart is even given a chance to change and intend to do a good deed instead of the evil one. As for the one who insists on doing an evil deed that he has intended, it is written down as one evil deed.

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(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him. See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 649; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 207/131.*

The one who intends to do an evil action but then shuns it is not equal to the one who did not think about doing it in the first place. This is because the one who thinks about an evil deed and did not do it, after wanting to do it, has abided by the restrictions of the religious laws, as they deterred him and helped him overcome the evil temptations within his soul. Undoubtedly, this is superior to the one who was unaware and was not provoked by these evil temptations in the first place.

Therefore Allah *the Almighty* wants to clarify to us that our deeds are recorded to deter us against doing evil deeds and to take account thereby of the Day of Recompense. If we said to someone, 'We will record all your deeds and then show them to the people', he will be ashamed to do any indecent action. How much more if the indecent actions are watched by noble angels who are harmed by any bad deed? Consequently, when Allah *the Almighty* addresses us, saying: 'Over you stand watchers, noble recorders who know what you do' (*al-Infitar*: 10-12), He *Glorified is He* draws our attention to the fact that we were not created in vain and we will not be left to wander purposelessly in life.

In the chapter of *Qaf*, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And certainly, We created man and We know what his mind suggests to him, and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein; When the two receivers (angels) receive [his actions], one sitting on the right and one on the left. Not a word does he utter but there is next to him a vigilant guardian' (*Qaf*: 16-18). In these verses, the two angels who are sitting on the right and on the left are described as '*q'aed*' (sitting) and not '*q'aid*', because the latter means that the person may stand at any time, but the former is a permanent quality of sitting, like '*raheem*' (merciful) and '*kareem*' (generous). Thus, the angel accompanies man all the time and never leaves him or is never inattentive to his actions except when man uses the bathroom, has sexual intercourse or takes a ritual bath. In other words, he leaves man only when the private parts are unveiled. However, their work of recording man's deeds and watching over him does not stop.

As we have previously said, the adjective '*q'aed*' is similar to '*muq'ad*', which is used to describe a paralysed person who cannot stand. This means that the angel is especially prepared to accompany the man all the time. It is as if the angel has no control over his limbs and organs. As he never leaves

the man—except in the aforementioned three times—and his work does not stop even during these times, then the fourth quality of these angels is: ‘Who know what you do’ (*al-Infitar*: 12). Thus, they know fully well all the people’s deeds, even if they left them temporarily in order not to see their private parts.

After this, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ ﴿١٣﴾ وَإِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٍ ﴿١٤﴾ يَصْلَوْنَهَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ﴿١٥﴾  
وَمَا هُمْ عَنْهَا بِغَائِبِينَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ﴿١٧﴾ ثُمَّ مَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ﴿١٨﴾  
يَوْمَ لَا تَمْلِكُ نَفْسٌ لِنَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَالْأَمْرُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلَّهِ ﴿١٩﴾

**The good will live in bliss [13] and the wicked will burn in the Fire [14] They will enter it on the Day of Judgment [15] and they will find no escape[16] What will explain to you what the Day of Judgment is [17] Yes! What will explain to you what the Day of Judgment is [18] The Day when no soul will be able to do anything for another; on that Day, command will belong to God [19] (The Quran, *al-Infitar*: 13 - 19)**

After Allah *the Almighty* confirms the matter of recording and numerating people’s deeds, He *the Almighty* gives a general Ruling with regards to the recorded deeds, that is, the people will ultimately be held accountable and recompensed according to their deeds recorded by the angels, be they good or evil. Clearly, recording the deeds is not in vain or without a purpose; rather, it has a purpose and an objective, namely being held accountable for them. 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).

This final destination is prepared for the people according to their position; concerning the righteous people, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘The righteous (*al-abrar*) will live in bliss’ (*al-Infitar*: 13). By contrast, the evil ones’ destination is as follows: ‘And the wicked will burn in the Fire’ (*al-Infitar*: 14). Here, the verse is emphasized by many affirmative particles, like ‘inna’ and ‘al-lam’. This eliminates the doubts of those who are skeptical of that destination.

The word '*al-bir*' (righteousness), from which the word '*al-abrar*' (righteous) is derived, is a general description that encompasses all good traits, a meaning which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...but righteousness (*bir*) is this, that one should guard (against evil)...' (*al-Baqara*: 189). Here, the word '*bir*' (righteousness) is defined briefly yet comprehensively. It is clarified in detail in Allah's saying: 'It is not righteousness (*bir*) that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness (*bir*) is this, that one should believe in Allah and the last day and the Angels and the Book and the Prophets, and give away wealth out of love for Him (Allah) to the near of kin, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarer, the beggars and for (the emancipation of) captives, and keep up prayer and pay the *zakat* (alms); and to fulfil one's promise when they make a promise, and to be patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflicts—these are they who are true (to themselves) and these are they who guard (against evil)' (*al-Baqara*: 177).

This verse tells us that righteousness is not a mere formality but rather it has a form and content. For example, when we read: '...surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 45), no one should say, 'What if I do not do indecent acts or evil ones, should I pray? In other words, as long as the ultimate objective of the prayer has been achieved, what is the importance of preserving it?' We say, 'You have to make a difference between the interdependent form and the content, for establishing prayer, which is the form, and achieving its objectives, which is the content, are both important'.

Allah *the Almighty* responds to such people by explaining the kinds of righteousness, saying: 'It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is this, that one should believe in Allah...' (*al-Baqara*: 177). So, there are many kinds of righteousness, and they all are based on both the form and the content, starting with the important matters of Belief: 'It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is this that one should believe in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets...' (*al-Baqara*: 177). All these are unseen matters related to the creed.

If one says that the Book and the Prophets are tangible, we should say to him, 'No, faith in them depends on believing in unseen matters, even if the

Book and the Prophets are tangible. For example, we did not see Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* when he was sent with the revelation to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In this sense, the Book and the Prophets are also unseen to us’.

Then righteousness is mentioned in the practical behaviours, starting with wealth and its role in the life of the society based on faith: ‘...and give away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarer, the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives...’ (*al-Baqara*: 177). It is as if expending wealth in good ways is an important basic matter in the believer’s behaviour. Before mentioning prayer and charity, Allah *the Almighty* mentions the matter of spending generally on the near of kin, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarer, the beggars and for the emancipation of captives. As the *zakat* is mentioned after giving from one’s wealth, it refers to the optional, supererogatory alms that are subcategorized under the stage of *Ihsan* (Goodness). Wealth is mentioned here first because it is an essential element in our life, a means of enjoyment and insurance for the continuity of life. However, the wealthy person has a chance to make a deal with Allah *the Almighty* by giving from of his wealth in charity.

For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* stipulates the condition of spending out of love for Him, saying: ‘...and give away wealth out of love for Him...’ (*al-Baqara*: 177). The one who likes money only gives it out freely because Allah’s Reward is more desirable to him than his money. This is with regards to the charitable alms, so what about the prescribed alms? Being charitable and benevolent indicates that the servant loved the religious obligations so much that he has elevated from the stage of Belief to that of Goodness by obliging himself to do supererogatory good deeds beyond the religious obligations.

We have discussed this matter in our explanation of the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Surely those who guard (against evil) shall be in gardens and fountains taking what their Lord gives them; surely they were before that doers of good’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 15-16). After this, Allah *the Almighty* mentions some good deeds which are neither obligatory nor part of Belief; they are subcategorized under the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘And whoever volunteers excess—it is better for him...’ (*al-Baqara*: 184).

The Lord *Glorified is He* then mentions some of the good people's qualities, saying: 'They used to sleep but little in the night. And in the early dawn they [were found] praying for forgiveness. And in their property was a portion for the beggar and the deprived' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 17-19). Allah *Glorified is He* does not say here 'a prescribed due' when referring to giving alms, indicating that the money they spend is the supererogatory alms, not the prescribed one.

Returning to the chapter under discussion, the Arabic word '*al-jaheem*' ('the fire' or 'hell') is derived from the word '*jahama*', which refers to the blazing fire. That is why we say, '*juhmat al-ghadab* (The fierceness of anger)'; we also say, '*Fulan jahamahu al-ghadab* (So-and-so seethed with anger)' which means that anger turned his face red due to the heat of the body.

The Quranic expression does not only mention the aforementioned affirmative particles to confirm and stress that the final destination of the wicked people is the fire; rather, it adds another statement: 'They will enter it on the Day of Judgment' (*al-Infitar*: 15). This verse means that the wicked people will enter the hell and suffer its extreme heat on the Day of Judgment.

If we review the verb '*yassla*' (to enter), we find it is used to refer to a painful, torturing fire, as in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'As they enter (*tassla*) the blazing Fire' (*al-Ghashiya*: 4). Yet, when speaking about the beneficial fire that is considered one of Allah's Blessings, the verb '*yastali*' (to warm oneself by the fire) is used, as in His saying: 'When Moses said to his family, "Surely I see fire; I will bring to you from it some news, or I will bring to you a burning firebrand so that you may warm yourselves (*tastaloon*)"' (*an-Naml*: 7).

After confirming the fact that the final destination of the wicked people is hell, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And they will find no escape' (*al-Infitar*: 16). This verse shows that after they enter hell, neither will they leave it or will it leave them; they will abide therein eternally. Death is not decreed for them so they may die, nor will its torment be lightened for them.

Next, the Lord *Glorified is He* says: What will explain to you what the Day of Judgment is? [17] Yes! What will explain to you what the Day of Judgment is? [18] The Day when no soul will be able to do anything for another; on that Day, the command will belong to Allah [19] (*al-Infitar*: 17-19)



The context here concerns the Day of Judgment when the good people will enter blissful Paradise, and the wicked people will be thrown into hell. Allah *the Almighty* wants to show us the greatness of that Day, which we do not see, saying: ‘What will explain to you what the Day of Judgment is?’ (*al-Infitar*: 17) This form of question gives hope that the reality of that Day will be known for sure in the future. The Lord *the Almighty* affirms this meaning, saying: ‘Yes! What will explain to you what the Day of Judgment is?’ (*al-Infitar*: 18) It is as if there are some stages of realization here.

Then He *the Almighty* gives us some idea about that Day, saying: ‘The Day when no soul will be able to do anything for another; on that Day, the command will belong to Allah’ (*al-Infitar*: 19). It is as if Allah *the Almighty* makes us realize it right now; it is though there are two kinds of realization: one through reporting and another when it actually happens. The first kind is referred to in His saying: ‘What will explain to you what the Day of Judgment is?’ (*al-Infitar*: 17) This is because the reality of the Day of Judgment will only be known when it actually takes place. In fact, the words cannot express what it really is like because they are limited and cannot express the true meaning in this regard. We have previously explained that the language consists of words that express certain meanings. The existence of the meaning always precedes the word expressing it. As the matters of the Day of Judgment are unseen and we have no true meanings of them, then there are no words to express their true reality. For this reason there are no words to express the unseen matters, which is why they will remain as such until we witness the Day of Judgment. At that time, these matters will be unveiled and we will see their reality.

Then the context clarifies to us one of the features of that Day, which is a crucial issue in the life of man: ‘The Day when no soul will be able to do anything for another; on that Day, the command will belong to Allah’ (*al-Infitar*: 19). So, this Day is distinguished by two matters: first, no soul will be able to do anything for another, and second, the command will entirely belong to Allah *the Almighty*.

This is because Allah *the Almighty* is the Creator Who created the human being and subjected the whole universe to him. Furthermore, He *the Almighty* gives him the means of thought, power and energy that make him interact

with the universe according to causes and effects. When he pays attention to these causal factors and becomes heedless of the Ultimate Causer, he wrongly thinks that the rain is caused by clouds and the fertility of the soil causes the plants to grow, etc. As for the true believer, he does not suffer this heedlessness as he deals with the universe as having causal factors which are set by an Ultimate Causer; he sees Allah's Power manifested in everything in the universe.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'The Day when no soul will be able to do anything for another...' (*al-Infitar*: 19), it means that in the worldly life the souls can avail others; this is a fact, but this will not be the case on the Day of Judgment. In the worldly life, do we not regard the minister, the director, the emir, the marshal and the intercessors as apparently being able to control affairs? The child sees his father providing him with food, drink, clothes and all the requirements of life. As he sees no one else providing him, he wrongly thinks that his father has power to manage affairs. However, when the child grows up, the facts of faith manifest themselves to him.

On the contrary, there is no room for such causal factors on the Day of Judgment; all of them will come to an end and only the Ultimate Causer will remain. One's fate in the Hereafter does not depend on a minister or a director, as they will all be humble before Allah, they will not be able to do anything for themselves, let alone other people. Therefore, in the Hereafter, the child and his parent will mutually neglect each other. Moreover, unlike the worldly life, there will be no supporter, helper, friend or intercessor, as Allah *the Almighty* says here: 'The Day when no soul will be able to do anything for another...' (*al-Infitar*: 19).

Indeed, even in the worldly life the command belongs to Allah *the Almighty*. However, when the souls were diverted and became heedless, they started to depend on the apparent causes of matters. By contrast, the command in the Hereafter, whether apparent or hidden, belongs totally to Allah *Glorified is He*. This matter of Belief is only recognized by the people of firm faith who always think about Allah *Glorified is He* and never become heedless of Him.

This meaning is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Then every soul will know what it has brought forward [for presentation]' (*at-Takwir*: 14). All

the human souls will be considered as one on that Day in the sense that all of them will be equal with regards to their submission to Allah's Command. The souls differed in the worldly life with regards to the causal factors, the rank of knowledge, the level of education, whims, lusts and desires. In the Hereafter, all of these differences will come to an end, for all the people must be equal, like one soul that can neither bring benefit nor cause harm: '...on that Day, the command will belong to Allah' (*al-Infitar*: 19).



the chapter of

***al-Mutaffifin***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Mutaffifin* <sup>(1)</sup>

وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُطَفِّفِينَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَكَالُوا عَلَى النَّاسِ يَسْتَوْفُونَ ﴿٢﴾  
وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ كَالُوهُمْ أَوْ وَزَنُوهُمْ يُخْسِرُونَ ﴿٣﴾ أَلَا يَظُنُّ أُولَٰئِكَ أَنَّهُمْ مَبْعُوثُونَ ﴿٤﴾  
لِيَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٥﴾ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ النَّاسُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٦﴾

**Woe to those who give short measure [1] who demand of  
other people full measure for themselves [2] but give less  
than they should when it is they who weigh or measure  
for others [3] Do these people not realize that they will be  
raised up [4] on a mighty Day [5] a Day when everyone will  
stand before the Lord of the Worlds [6]  
(The Quran, *al-Mutaffifin*: 1-6)**

The chapter of *al-Mutaffifin* is in harmony with the context of the chapter that precedes it and is in line with the chapter that follows it with regards to the common purpose of the *Juz* of ‘*Amma* (30<sup>th</sup> Section of the Quran), that is, affirming the matter of Resurrection and the Last Day which is stated repetitively throughout the whole *Juz*’ (section).

The matter of Resurrection is held in that important position because it is the last pillar of Belief that happens, along with Belief in Allah (God)<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) The chapter of *al-Mutaffifin* is chapter number 83 in the order of the Quran. Scholars differ over whether it was the last chapter to be revealed in Mecca, or the first one to be revealed in Medina. It was revealed after the chapter of *al-Ankabut* and before *al-Baqara*. It consists of 36 verses. See As-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan Fi ‘Ulum Al-Quran*, 1/41.

(2) The Islamic concept of ‘Allah’ is not the same as the Christian and Jewish concept of ‘God’. However, the word ‘Allah’ does not refer to a tribal god or the God of only Muslims; it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We=

*the Almighty* and then in what He *Glorified is He* has told us in this regard, including the unseen matters like the angels, the Messengers, the Divine Decree, Predestination and the Last Day. Furthermore, the Last Day is the Day when the believer receives the reward of his Belief. Consequently, the one who does not believe in Allah *the Almighty* out of love should do so out of fear.

The two chapters of *at-Takwir* and *al-Infitar* reading: 'When the sun is shrouded in darkness' (*at-Takwir*: 1) and 'When the sky breaks apart' (*al-Infitar*: 1), respectively, highlight the introductory events of the Day of Resurrection. They both mention many introductory events and calamities that will happen on the Day of Judgment. Then Allah *the Almighty* tells us in the chapter of *al-Mutaffifin* about that mighty Day when all the people will stand before the Lord of the worlds. After this, He *Glorified is He* mentions the final end that will come to pass after these introductory events. After standing before Allah *the Almighty* being held accountable and receiving the recompense according to the deeds recorded in the books, we will go to either Paradise or Hell.

There is another harmonious aspect between the chapter that preceded *al-Mutaffifin* and that which follows it. The chapter of *al-Infitar*, which is the previous chapter, makes mention of the recorders who write the deeds: 'Over you stand watchers, noble recorders who know what you do' (*al-Infitar*: 10-12). As for the chapter in question: *al-Mutaffifin*, it also sheds light on these written books: 'No indeed! The list of the wicked is in *Sijjin*' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 7) and: 'No indeed! The list of the truly good is in *Illiyin*' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 18). Then Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of *al-Inshiqaq*, tells us about the inevitable result and the final destination: 'Whoever is given his record in his right hand' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 7), and: 'But whoever is given his record from behind his back' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 10).

Thus, these three chapters give us the full picture when we put them together. However, the chapter of *al-Mutaffifin* also mentions a matter related to the human code of ethics, not just issues concerned with Belief. This is

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= prefer, however, to use 'Allah' rather than 'God' as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.



because the chapter in question was the last one to be revealed in Mecca<sup>(1)</sup> and the Meccan chapters were concerned mostly with matters of Belief. But it also discusses a complementary matter related to actions carried out in life, behaviour and transactions that is, giving short measure. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Woe to those who give short measure, [those] who demand of other people full measure for themselves, but give less than they should when it is they who weigh or measure for others!’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 1-6) This matter organizes the transactions and preserves people’s rights. Discussing such matters is one of the features of the verses revealed in Medina where Islam established itself and the Muslims formed a state that had its own foundations, sovereignty and law.

Thus, talking about the codes of behaviour and the transactions in Mecca was purposeful. It is as if the Lord *the Almighty* directs our attention to an important matter—after providing the believers with the power of Belief in the Meccan revelation. He *Glorified is He* wanted to say to us, ‘The creeds are not required in themselves and the matter of Belief is not all about pronouncing the Word of Monotheism and embracing Islam by pronouncing the two testimonies of faith. Rather, behind Belief there are behaviours and acts that elevate the believer to the utmost level of human perfection.

In fact, Allah *the Almighty* has created the creatures according to two kinds: coerced creatures that have no free choice. This kind includes all the created beings except for the Jinn and human beings. This kind can choose nothing but what is prescribed for it in order to achieve its function in the universe. All the manifestations of beauty are found in this kind, including harmony, compliance, rights, justice and reform. As for the second kind, which has a free choice, it includes man. For this reason, corruption takes place in the universe when man intervenes with his opinion, ignorance or man-made laws that are very different from Allah’s Law. This meaning is clear in His Saying: ‘Do you not see that Allah is He Whom obeys whoever

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(1) As-Suyuti maintained that the chapter of *al-Mutaffifin* was the first chapter to be revealed in Medina. However, Abu ‘Amr said that it was the last chapter to be revealed in Mecca. See As-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan Fi ‘Ulum Al-Quran*, 1/41; *Al-Fara’*, *Ma‘ani Al-Quran*, 3/245; and Abu ‘Amr Ad-Dani, *Al-Bayan Fi ‘Ad Aay Al-Quran*

is in the heavens and whoever is in the earth...' (*al-Hajj*: 18). This refers to the angels and the unseen objects, as Allah *the Almighty* then mentions man, saying: '....and the sun and the moon and the stars, and the mountains and the trees, and the animals and many of the people—and many there are against whom chastisement has become necessary. And whomsoever Allah abases, there is none who can make him honourable; surely Allah does what He pleases' (*al-Hajj*: 18).

Thus, all the species bow down obeying and submitting to Allah *the Almighty* except for the human being. Many people bow down, but many others commit sins and that is why they will be punished. We may ask why man acts anomalously, contrary to all the other the created beings. This is because he has thoughts and whims which incite him to violate his Lord's Way of Guidance. In fact, the whims often incite the person to satisfy his fleeting desires and make him forget about the ultimate recompense.

Allah *Glorified is He* calls the Law by which He has created the creatures 'a balance', saying: 'And the heaven, He raised it high, and He made the balance, that you may not be inordinate in respect of the measure. And keep up the balance with equity and do not make the measure deficient' (*ar-Rahman*: 7-9). He *the Almighty* warns us against transgressing the balance and commands us to keep it. It is as if He *the Almighty* says to us, 'If you want your life to be stable and your affairs to be as sound as that of the heavens and the earth, then accept the Balance of truth that came to you from Allah *Glorified is He*. However, if you violated this Balance, your life will become corrupt'.

The chapter of *al-Mutafiffin* affirms the importance of both the material balance that weighs the tangible matters, and the spiritual balance that prescribes the fulfilment of rights and duties in every aspect of life. This importance is manifested in the fact that man naturally needs other people because his/her lifetime in this worldly life is limited, and s/he thus cannot learn everything to satisfy his/her unending requirements. So, s/he cannot meet them alone, given the fact that one can neither do everything for him/herself nor satisfy all his/her needs apart from other people. That is why everyone dedicates him/herself to mastering and excelling at a certain job,

leaving the other jobs for other people to master. Consequently, people need to barter, buy, sell and engage in various transactions. Further, they need a means to help them fulfil their rights and duties and to weigh the matters up justly and fairly.

Thus, the balance should be one and the same for all people; it should be used when one gives to the people and takes from them without any variation or difference in the balance used in both transactions. However, when a person changes the balance, taking a full measure and giving a short one, then s/he oversteps the boundaries, transgresses and deals unjustly with the people. The consequence of this action is the corruption of people's activities in life. Likewise, in the spiritual matters, one should fulfil his/her duties before asking the people to fulfil theirs. The chapter in question talks about giving full measure in the material aspects according to the right balance that sustains the material life.

The word 'Woe' means perdition or punishment, yet it, in this context, refers to the encompassing punishment that surrounds man from all directions. Such a punishment gathers between the tangible pain and the non-tangible one, including distress and grief. The tangible punishment may be enduring, but when the spiritual one – including the heart's distress and the soul's pain – is added, the punishment overwhelms the person from all the directions.

For this reason, scholars opine that the 'Woe' here refers to a Valley in the hell; it is extremely hot that the hell itself complains about its heat. Further, some say that the word 'Woe' means perdition, an encompassing evil or a painful punishment. So, this word connotes all these meanings. It is possible that all of them will be realized in this valley of the hell. The one thrown in this valley will lose all the hopes of salvation or the mitigation of the punishment. So, we should ponder on how the chapter is started with this strong threat that gathers all kinds of punishment. We would expect that this punishment is prepared for those who commit major crimes like murder or adultery; however, it is prepared for a crime that people might consider trivial.

Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Woe to those who give short measure.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 1) The word *Mutaffifin* (those who give short measure) is derived from the word *Taffa*, which means that something increases a little

bit. It is the case when the measure is filled and one adds a small amount of something beyond the right amount. This addition falls from the balance. Thus, *At-Tatfif* is the small, unlawful increment in the measure against which Allah *the Almighty* gives a terrifying warning and a strong threat. Thus, this small increment is not trivial with Allah *the Almighty* even if it is regarded so by the human beings. This is because the one who dares to unlawfully take a small thing may dare to take a great one. Further, the small quantities become great when they are added to each other. In fact, the base soul lusts for wealth and high position through the small properties that they unlawfully appropriate from the people.

Then, the chapter tells us about the characteristics of *al-Mutaffifin*, saying: 'Who demand of other people full measure for themselves.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 2) Here, the Quran portrays to us one prevailing feature of the people's societal status at the time of revelation. Some people used to misuse their prestigious rank and high position – which they gained through their wealth – in their tribes to control people's provision and exploit their need. The Quran expresses this matter, saying: 'Who demand of other people full measure for themselves.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 2) This verse indicates that those people took more than their rights and ruthlessly exploited people's need - instead of fulfilling their due rights without any increment. In doing so, they exploited their mastery and sovereignty. Their terrifying power frightens their givers so they could do nothing but to give them more than the due measure. In this way, the transaction becomes detrimental to the givers instead of being beneficial. So, the verse means that *al-Mutaffifin* are those who take more than the just measure.

On the other hand, they: '...give less than they should when it is they who weigh or measure for others!' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 3) The expression of the verse indicates that *al-Mutaffifin* used to control the economy and dominate the transactions, be they buyers or sellers. They take an excessive measure from the people and give them a short one, which leads to people's financial loss. This shows us how the powerful people used to appropriate the common people's rights - those who strive to earn a living. The masters seize the fruit of their toil and impoverished them. The working class is the one that farms,

harvests and produces, but then gives the harvest to those powerful, exploiting masters. Then, the working people beg for food every day.

As the status of the people had been awful to that extent, the Meccan verses dealt with it, despite the fact that the main focus in that period was on the creedal matters and establishing them in the hearts of the people before talking about the practical way of Guidance and Behaviour. This grim reality was one of the social features in the tribe of Quraysh which used to make two journeys: one in the winter and another in the summer. The masters of Quraysh had full control over the common people's affairs and provision and no one of the latter dared to resist this reality.

It is as if the Quranic context takes advantage of talking about the Last Day to remind the people that such an awful societal status does not befit a society whose members believe in Allah *the Almighty* and the Last Day. If you take a reflective look at the verses in question: 'Who demand of other people full measure for themselves, but give less than they should when it is they who weigh or measure for others!' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 2-3) you find that the powerful people take with the measure but give the people with both the weight and measure, which is another trick to take an excessive amount of something because the measure is not so accurate and allows the person to take more than the due quantity. As it is controlled by the movement of the hand, it can be easily manipulated through many tricks, like putting the hand beside or over the measure. Many sellers do the like of these tricks. As for the weight, it is accurate and cannot easily be manipulated.

Fulfilment of rights here has a broad meaning; it is not confined to buying, selling, measuring and weighing. It transcends these meanings to include all the matters of life and every right and duty. Thus, the hired one, the worker, the employee, the director and the minister all should completely do their jobs as long as they are paid for them. If we want our material, economic, educational, spiritual and social life to be stable, we should apply the true balance and give and take by the same balance. By contrast, if we give short measure and take an excessive one, a gap will appear in the society and unsolvable problems will emerge.

When we carefully reflect on the word 'Woe...' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 1), we find that this punishment, which we have previously described, befalls those who have two qualities: taking with excessive measure and giving with a short one. So, that punishment is incurred for having both these two qualities. Further, when the scholars discuss the meaning of the word 'woe,' some of them say that it is a statement made by Allah *the Almighty* while others hold the position that it is a kind of supplication. We say, 'It is Allah Who revealed this verse and that is why the word 'woe' is both a statement and a supplication.' That is to say that He *Glorified is He* tells us at the beginning of this chapter that a 'woe' will be the final destination for those who give short measure and take an excessive one. Further, this word serves as a supplication to cause the 'woe' to befall them. This is because 'supplicating' means that someone invokes Allah *the Almighty* to cause the punishment, for example, to fall on his/her enemy. In this case, one invokes the One Who is fully Able to punish his/her enemy because s/he cannot do that by him/herself.

So, if the One Who is making the supplication is Allah *the Almighty* then He *Glorified is He* is fully Able to punish them; it suffices that He *the Almighty* says: 'Woe to those who give short measure.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 1) As it is He *the Almighty* Who utters that 'supplication,' it will inevitably come to pass, as He *the Almighty* is Omnipotent. Thus, the word 'woe' serves as a statement and a supplication.

Then the context directs our attention to the Last Day, saying: 'Do these people not realize that they will be raised up on a mighty Day, a Day when everyone will stand before the Lord of the Worlds?' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 4-6) These verses are presented in the condemnatory interrogation style to blame them for their denial of the final destination and the Last Day. They also express astonishment about their action. The Arabic word *yazhun* 'realize' is used instead of 'firmly believe' in His saying: 'Do these people not realize that they will be raised up ...' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 4) This is because 'firm belief' in the Last Day is not a condition to be deterred against evil actions, for a mere realization about it is enough, even if this realization did not reach the rank of certitude. For example, one may say, 'Do not take this road because it is too dangerous.' Evading the probable danger here makes the person regard

it as a certain danger, so what would we think if the coming of the Last Day is not probable but rather certain? Even if it is only considered probable, should not the person prepare him/herself for it?!

Those who give short measure were deceived by the imminent gain and paid no attention to the deferred punishment. The wise person doesn't consider the imminent, fleeting benefit of something, rather, s/he considers that benefit along with its recompense. In fact, not all the worldly benefits are considered so with regard to the Hereafter, for the worldly benefit could incur a punishment in the Hereafter. Thus, if those people had rightly considered this matter, they would not have given short measures and weights.

Further, the Arabic verb *yazhun* (to realize) is used because the disbelievers were always talking about the Last Day as a passing thought, not a reality, a fact which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And when it was said, Surely the promise of Allah is true and as for the hour, there is no doubt about it, you said: We do not know what the hour is; we do not think (that it will come to pass) save a passing thought, and we are not at all sure.' (*al-Jathiya*: 32)

The demonstrative pronoun in His saying: 'Do these people not realize that they will be raised up ...' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 4) refers to a certain people distinguished by doing something. It is as if those people have been distinguished by the act of giving short measure, which consequently became one of their inherent, distinctive qualities.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* describes the Day of Judgment, saying: '...they will be raised up on a mighty Day.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 4-5) It is described as 'mighty' in comparison with the worldly life, as it is eternal and blissful for the believers. We have previously drawn this comparison from many angles. With regard to the human being, his/her worldly life is confined to his/her lifetime; one has nothing to do with its duration from the time of Adam until the Day of Judgment. Further, one's lifetime is not ensured and his/her pleasure and luxury are in proportion to his/her physical and financial abilities. Moreover, the person will untimely pass away.

By contrast, life in the Hereafter is ensured and eternal; one's pleasure does not pass by, nor does s/he leave it. Besides, one's ability to enjoy the

pleasures is in proportion to Allah's Power. These are some of the aspects of the superiority of the Hereafter to the underrated worldly life. So, when we make this comparison, the superiority and greatness of the Hereafter become apparent, as it is the real, eternal life that merits our striving for it. As for the worldly life, it is a fake adornment, a deception and a fleeting pleasure, however great it may be considered.

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...a Day when everyone will stand before the Lord of the Worlds,' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 6) there is another aspect of the greatness of that Day. In our daily life, we stand before the dignitaries, like the judge, the ruler, the director, the minister, the rich and the powerful. There are some reasons for standing, even unwillingly, before them. On the contrary, in the Hereafter, all the people will stand before Allah *the Almighty* not before anyone else, as all of them will be in a humble position before Him *Glorified is He*. So, all the people will be equal in this respect because the Hereafter does not depend on the causal factors, but rather on the Ultimate Causer - this is what we should fear, care for and take into account.

The words: '... stand before ...' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 6) indicate the state of panic on the Day of Judgment, for all the people will stand suddenly out of fear and awe. This could be similar to a case in the worldly life when a president or a dignitary enters upon us and thus all the people will stand fast even if they are sitting relaxingly. The words 'stand before' also tell us that the people in their normal lives are in different states, doing what they want; some people sleep, others sit, and so on. However, on the Day of Judgment, all mankind will stand fast, waiting for what is going to happen. That is why scholars opine that the hardship and the difficulty of this situation will make the people wish to leave it even if they go to the Hell. They will remain standing however long the period of standing lasts. Out of the calamities they are watching, no one can sit or think about having a rest.

Despite this hardship, there is a sign of hope in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...the Lord of the Worlds?' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 6) Standing will be before the Lord Who sustains all the creatures, created out of nothing, and provides the creatures with care, education and sustenance to meet their needs. The Attribute of Lordship is closer to Mercy and Compassion, for the people are His creation



and He *the Almighty* is All-Merciful and All-Compassionate towards them. The Attribute ‘The Lord of the worlds’ means that the person stands before the One Who fully knows him/her and nothing of his/her affairs, be they trivial or great, is hidden from Him. He *Glorified is He* is man’s Creator Who is in charge of sustaining and educating him/her. Further, He *the Almighty* prepares him/her educationally and religiously to stand in a state of honour on the Day of Judgment, not in that of disgrace.

Thus, in that situation, there is no possibility of circumvention, denial or rejection, as the man is standing before the One Who knows the secret and what is even more hidden than it. He *the Almighty* recorded all man’s actions and movements after sending Messengers and clarifying the lawful and the unlawful matters. Accordingly, there is no argument or excuse for anyone. Thus, the matter of the Day of Judgment is extremely serious:

The matter is hard, so work earnestly

Prepare yourselves for it and be ready

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْفُجَّارِ لَفِي سِجِّينٍ ﴿٧﴾ وَمَا أَذْرَكَ مَا سِجِّينٌ ﴿٨﴾ كِتَابٌ مَرْقُومٌ ﴿٩﴾

**No indeed! The list of the wicked is in Sijjin [7] what will explain to you what Sijjin is? [8] a clearly numbered list [9]**  
(The Quran, *al-Mutaffifin*: 7-9)

We have explained before that Allah *the Almighty* tells us previously about the recorders. Now, He *the Almighty* tells us about what is recorded, which is the books of the wicked and those of the good people. The Arabic word *Kalla* (No indeed) carries the meaning of reproach and condemnation for the matter mentioned in His saying: ‘Do these people not realize that they will be raised up.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 5) It is as if He *the Almighty* says, ‘Do not pay attention to those who deny the Day of Judgment.’

One should take heed of the fact that: ‘The list of the wicked is in Sijjin.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 7) They are called ‘wicked’ because they transgressed the bounds of obedience and violated the religious obligations. The list here

refers to their records of deeds which are in *Sijjin*. Allah *the Almighty* then tells us about the meaning of *Sijjin* because it is unseen, saying: ‘What will explain to you what *Sijjin* is?’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 8) This means that we have no ability to know the meaning of *Sijjin*, so our knowledge of it depends on what He *the Almighty* tells us about it. This is because its subtleness and greatness are unseen and beyond the intellectual abilities.

Afterwards, He *the Almighty* says about *Sijjin*: ‘...a clearly numbered list.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 9) The Arabic word *Marqum* means that it is written in a way like engraving on the stones. This clearly indicates that the deeds are recorded in a way like the indelible engraving inscription, which proves that it is a well-documented book whose content cannot be deleted. Another possible interpretation is that the word *Marqum* means that the book is known to be the book of the wicked, and its owner’s wickedness is marked by it. When s/he sees it, s/he knows that it is the book of the wicked because it is marked by the wicked people’s awful, terrible features and signs. Thus, the accuracy and the documentation of the book negate any possibility of falsification, additions and omissions. This is due to the fact that it is recorded by watchful, noble Angels who know what the people do.

The word *Sijjin* is derived from *As-Sijn*, which is the place wherein man is imprisoned. So, it is as if the book is imprisoned to be kept intact. Or, it is sealed so that no one can open it or alter its content. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘What will explain to you what *Sijjin* is?’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 8) This means that no one can tell us about it except Him *the Almighty*. The verb *Adrak* (to realize) is mentioned in the past form in the verse in question to indicate that He *the Almighty* would explain to him *peace and blessings be upon him* about *Sijjin* in the future. By contrast, if the verb is mentioned in the present form, it negates the possibility of realization in both the past and the future.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١٠﴾ الَّذِينَ يَكْذِبُونَ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ﴿١١﴾  
وَمَا يَكْذِبُ بِهِ إِلَّا كُلُّ مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ ﴿١٢﴾ إِذَا نُتِلَّى عَلَيْهِ ءِثْنَانَا قَالَ أَسْطِيزُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

**Woe on that day to the deniers [10] those who deny the Day of Judgment [11] Only the evil aggressor denies it [12] when Our revelations are recited to him, he says, ‘Ancient fables!’ [13] (The Quran, *al-Mutaffifin*: 10 - 13)**

The deniers deserve the same ‘woe’ that befalls those who give short measure. The Day referred to in His saying: ‘...on that day to the deniers.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 10) is the Day of Judgment. Denial, as we have said, is a saying contrary to the reality. In addition, it falsifies the facts. The utmost degree of denial is disbelieving in the main pillars of faith, including belief in Allah *the Almighty* and the Last Day. Thus, denial of any mundane matter in life is not comparable to denying the Last Day; that is why it is especially mentioned here in the verse: ‘Those who deny the Day of Judgment!’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 11) In fact, no one dares to commit this crime except: ‘...the evil aggressor...’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 12).

Thus, the deniers deserved to be described by the following two qualities: evil and aggression. As for the aggressor, it is the one who dares to falsify the truth. So, s/he goes beyond the limits in his/her aggression to the extent that s/he violates Allah’s Religion and Law. As for the second description, namely evil, it expresses hyperbole, that is, s/he is not an ordinary bad person, rather, s/he is so evil that s/he dares to commit sins, keeps on doing them and gets familiar with them until this evil quality becomes one of his/her inherent qualities.

Afterwards, that evil denier is described as: ‘...when Our Revelations are recited to him, he says, “Ancient fables!”’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 13) So, if we wanted to remind such people about the Day of Judgment and its calamities in order to be deterred, s/he instead would belie the verses and negate the whole Quran, saying about it, ‘Ancient fables.’ The Quranic expression, ‘Ancient fables,’ refers to the predecessors’ stories and false accounts that had been recorded in their books. The idea of negating the text clearly indicates that such a person is totally unable to bear the responsibility for the religious obligations, or to comply with them. So s/he lies to him/herself and

tries to convince him/herself that the Day of Judgment is not real. Further, s/he gives him/herself the hope in the non-existence of that Day. Otherwise, how can s/he believe in it while being an evil aggressor, transgressor against him/herself and violator of the bounds? Thus, all what s/he can do is to contradict and deceive him/herself by denying absolutely the certain coming of the Day of Judgment, as there is no fortune or good share for him/her on that Day. Rather, it is the woe and the great, severe, humiliating punishments that will be waiting for him/her. That is why Allah *the Almighty* exposes such people, saying afterwards:

كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَمَحْجُورُونَ ﴿١٥﴾  
ثُمَّ إِنَّهُمْ لَصَالُوا الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١٦﴾ ثُمَّ يُقَالُ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تَكْذِبُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

**No indeed! Their hearts are encrusted with what they have done [14] No indeed! On that Day they will be screened off from their Lord [15] they will burn in Hell [16] and they will be told, ‘This is what you called a lie’ [17]**  
**(The Quran, *al-Mutaffifin*: 14 - 17)**

The reason for their denial is the encrustation that overwhelmed their hearts and put off the light of Guidance therein. The sins and evil deeds accumulated on their hearts, causing the insight to be obliterated and the heart to become blind. Consequently, the heart was unable to recognise what is good or reject what is evil. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* portrayed this state in a Prophetic Hadith narrated on the authority of Hudhyfa ibn Al-Yaman, saying: ‘Temptations will be presented to men's hearts as a reed mat is woven stick by stick and any heart which is impregnated by them will have a black mark put into it, but any heart which rejects them will have a white mark put in it. The result is that there will become two types of hearts: one white like a white stone which will not be harmed by any turmoil or temptation, so long as the heavens and the earth endure; and the other black and dust-coloured like a vessel which is upset, not recognizing what is good or rejecting what is abominable, but being impregnated with passion.’<sup>(1)</sup>

(1) See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 231/144; Ibn Manda, *Kitab Al-Iman*, 1/468; and Al-Baghawi, *Sharh As-Sunna*, Hadith no. 4218.

Heedlessness is the essential cause of the heart's encrustation, as those people commit the sins and the evil deeds and pay no attention to their consequences. These actions accumulate on the heart and lead to its darkness. They further veil the light of faith from penetrating into it. So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Their hearts are encrusted with what they have done' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 14) means that their hearts were piled with sins and evil deeds that they could do nothing but to belie the Day of Judgment. This is because if they did not belie it, they would lose the enjoyment of their pleasures in the worldly life as they would have to think about facing that painful, awful destination. As they tried to unveil this horrible fact and to remove it from their thinking, they could do nothing but to deny the Day of Judgment.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'No indeed! On that Day they will be screened off from their Lord' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 15) means that they will be barred from their Lord on that Day because their hearts were unveiled from Him *Glorified is He* in the worldly life due to committing sins and evil deeds. Therefore, as their hearts are unveiled from Him in the worldly life, they would be screened off Him on the Day of Judgment, given that the heart is the home of belief and certitude in Allah *the Almighty*.

'Screening off' is a kind of spiritual and psychological punishment that pains the soul, not the body. This is because such people did not experience the state of being close to Allah *the Almighty* in the worldly life. If they had feelings, sensations and high spiritual rank, the sins would not bar them from having a close relation with Him *Glorified is He*.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...they will burn in Hell,' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 16) means that the deniers will justly and fairly suffer the extreme heat of the Hell when they enter it. So, the punishment is not only psychological but also physical. With regard to His saying: '...and they will be told, "This is what you called a lie."' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 17) signifies that in the Hereafter they will be told, 'This is the punishment that you used to deny in the worldly life.' This is a way of rebuking and reproaching them. It is like when you say to a negligent student who fails the exam, 'Your failure is the consequence of your negligence of your lessons and absence from the classes.' This makes him/her recall the causes that landed him/her in that embarrassing situation.

Thus, there are three calamitous situations that the deniers of the Day of Judgment suffer: being screened off Allah *the Almighty*; burning in the hell; and showing them the consequences of their denial as a way of reproach. This will gather together the spiritual, psychological and the material, physical pain, making the punishment severer and more painful.

The chapter in question discusses the situation of those who give short measure and its effect on their book which is in *Sijjin*. Then, it mentions the situation of the evil aggressors who deny the Day of Judgment and their punishment. Now, Allah *the Almighty* presents the antithetical situation of the good people whose books are in *Illyyin*, saying:

كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْأَبْرَارِ لَفِي عَلَيِّينَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا عَلَيُّونَ ﴿١٩﴾ كِتَابٌ مَرْفُومٌ ﴿٢٠﴾  
 يَشْهَدُهُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ عَلَى الْأَرَآئِكِ يَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ تَعْرِفُ فِي  
 وُجُوهِهِمْ نَضْرَةَ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٢٤﴾ يُسْقَوْنَ مِنْ رَحِيقٍ مَخْتُومٍ ﴿٢٥﴾ خَتَمُهُ مِسْكٌ وَفِي  
 ذَلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَفِسُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَمِمَّا رَجَاهُ مِنْ تَسْنِيمٍ ﴿٢٧﴾  
 عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا الْمُقَرَّبُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

**No indeed! The list of the truly good is in Illiyyin [18]  
 what will explain to you what Illiyyin is? [19] a clearly  
 written list [20] witnessed by those brought near [21] The  
 truly good will live in bliss [22] seated on couches, gazing  
 around [23] You will recognize on their faces the radiance  
 of bliss [24] They will be served a sealed nectar [25] its seal  
 [perfumed with] a fragrant herb — let those who strive,  
 strive for this [26] mixed with the water of Tasnim [27]  
 a spring from which those brought near will drink [28]  
 (The Quran, *al-Mutaffifin*: 18 - 28)**

In these verses in question, drawing a comparison between the good and the evil people is further illustrated. This is because mentioning the two opposite groups together makes the difference clearer and more obvious. After telling us about the wicked people's book, which is in *Sijjin*, He *the Almighty* mentions the good people's book. It is thus clear that it is up to the man to choose his/her book.

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘No indeed! The list of the truly good is in *Illiyin*,’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 18) the good people here are those who possess all the traits of goodness and righteousness. As for their book, which is in *Illiyin*, it is the record of their deeds. The word *Illiyin* denotes highness, loftiness and supremacy. This position of highness is under the Throne of the Lord of Mercy. As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...what will explain to you what *Illiyin* is?’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 19) it means that this high position is beyond any intellectual imaginations. No one except Him *Glorified is He* can tell us about that high position because highness has some limited connotations in the human language. So, we should not perceive that high position according to our limited language, for its reality is beyond imagination. In other words, the position that Allah *the Almighty* has told us about is an unseen matter and its reality and meaning are beyond the expression of the human language. However, He *the Almighty* addresses us in the way that we can understand and by the language we use. Therefore, the book of the truly good is in a high position beyond our perception.

We notice that the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...a clearly written list...’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 20) is used to describe both the book of the good and that of the wicked, as both kinds of books are accurately recorded, written down and documented. Further, both of them are undeletable, unchangeable and recording every small and great matter. These descriptions pain the wicked people and increase their regret and sadness. On the other hand, they delight the good people and increase their happiness and gladness. So, the descriptions of the two books are the same, but their effect changes according to the recipient of the book.

As the book of the good people is bright and honourable, the Angels of the heavens eagerly proceed to witness it, as He *the Almighty* says here: ‘witnessed by those brought near.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 21) This verse shows that the Angels who are in the high position (*Illiyin*) witness the book of good deeds, including acts of worship offered to Allah *the Almighty* because all its content is delightful.

These acts of obedience are not found in the books of the wicked people, as they are books of disobedience, evil and wickedness. So, how can the

Angels witness them? That is why the context mentions the two following verses successively: '...a clearly numbered list. Woe on that day to the deniers.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 9-10) The wicked people's books are sources of disgrace and humiliation; their owners themselves feel ashamed at them and wish that they do not see them. In this regard, the Quran relates that those people will say: '...O would that my book had never been given me: And I had not known what my account was' (*al-Haqqa*: 25-26).

So, the saying of Allah, Almighty: '...witnessed by those brought near' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 21) indicates that all the creatures in the universe harmoniously obey and worship Allah *the Almighty* and submit to Him *Glorified is He*. Even the inanimate objects are in a perfect harmony with the rest of the universal creatures as they obey Him *the Almighty* and never disobey Him or violate His Way of Guidance. This fact is substantiated by His saying: 'How many of the gardens and fountains have they left! And cornfields and noble places! And goodly things wherein they rejoiced; Thus (it was), and We gave them as a heritage to another people. So the heaven and the earth did not weep for them, nor were they respited.' (*ad-Dukhan*: 25-29)

Weeping is one of the loftiest emotions and feelings that distinguish the human being from other creatures. So, what if the inanimate objects expressed these emotions? Not weeping for the death of the disbeliever alludes to the fact that the heaven and the earth weep for the death of the believer. In this connection, it is reported that 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'When the believer dies, two spots weep for his/her departure: a spot on the earth and a spot in the heaven. The spot of the earth is the place of his prostration and the spot of the heaven is the place of the ascension of his/her deeds.'<sup>(1)</sup>

One of the meanings of the saying of Allah, Almighty: '...witnessed by those brought near' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 21) is that the Angels witness the recording and the writing down of the books of deeds. Another possible meaning is

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(1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Samarqandi relates that Ibn 'Abbas said, 'For every believer there is a door in the heaven through which his/her deeds ascends and down from which his/her provision descends. So, when s/he dies, his/her door of the heaven and spots of the earth weep for his/her death.' See As-Samarqandi, *Bahr Al-'Ulum*, 3/571.



that they witness in favour of the good people. So, the deeds are documented through the witness along with the documentation.

Afterwards, the verses tell us about the reward and the final destination of the good people, saying: ‘The truly good will live in bliss.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 22) The bliss is a name that encompasses all the pleasures that the human being enjoys and elevates him/her to the state of satisfaction, not needing any other kind of pleasures. The bliss in that sense is best applicable to the pleasures in the Hereafter – not that of the worldly life.

We have previously explained the difference between the pleasure of the worldly life and that of the Hereafter and concluded that the pleasure in the latter is the real, pure one, as it is entirely free from all the disturbances of the pleasure in the worldly life. The Quran briefly expresses this meaning in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘And indeed, the home of the Hereafter - that is the [eternal] life, if only they knew.’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 64)

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...seated on couches, gazing around...’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 64) it is meant to show some of the signs of pleasure in the Hereafter. The first of these pleasures is that the good people sit on couches, gazing around. The utmost endeavour of the exegetes in interpreting the meaning of ‘couches’ here is to say, ‘The couches are the beds on which a transparent mosquito net is put.’ This is the meaning of ‘couches’ in the human language. However, the paradise is unseen to our eyes and unperceivable by our minds. That is why there is no word in the language that could describe it, given that the word is only used after the existence of the meaning it conveys.

That is why when the Quran says: ‘A parable of the garden which those guarding (against evil) are promised...’ (*Muhammad*: 15), it states that it just gives a ‘parable’ of the paradise rather than describing its reality, as Allah *the Almighty* says about it: ‘So no soul knows what is hidden for them of that which will refresh the eyes; a reward for what they did.’ (*as-Sajda*: 17) As no soul knows the pleasures therein, then the language cannot express them. As for the images that the Quran portrays for the paradise, they are meant to make it easy for us to understand these pleasures – through likening its pleasures to that of the worldly life.

Let us give an example to further illustrate this point; the Arabs used to live on dates, milk and water – these were the basic elements of their sustenance. Now, the taste of the milk may change and the taste of the water may be altered. Despite that, they used to drink them. That is why Allah *the Almighty* describes the pleasure in the Hereafter, saying: ‘...herein are rivers of water that does not alter, and rivers of milk the taste whereof does not change, and rivers of drink delicious to those who drink, and rivers of honey clarified...’ (*Muhammad*: 15).

The difference between the pleasure of the Hereafter and that of the worldly life is that the former is purified from all the impurities and the disturbances of that of the latter, which disturbs the one who wants to enjoy them. People’s perception of the pleasure differs according to their nature and the environment wherein they live. Sitting on a comfortable couch was the Arab’s climax of luxury, especially if there is a transparent mosquito net on it. When s/he was to set relaxingly to set the fire and roast the meat, the mosquitos and other insects frequently used to disturb his/her sitting. Thus, the couches with a mosquito net were the utmost pleasure for an Arab, even if this may not be the case for the urban people.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...gazing around...’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 23) it gives us a glimpse about another kind of pleasure in the Hereafter. In the worldly life, the one who sits on a couch may be deprived of enjoying the beautiful view because s/he is preoccupied with some concerns. On the contrary, the people in paradise are not distracted from enjoying its pleasures by any concerns. So, they look at unlimited beauty that the eyes cannot be distracted from. That is why He *the Almighty* says afterwards: ‘You will recognise on their faces the radiance of bliss.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 24)

So, the effects of bliss appear on the faces of the people of paradise. These effects are clearly apparent in the manifestations of happiness, delight, gladness and contentment. In fact, face is the mirror that expresses the true, inner feelings of the human soul. When one looks at the faces of those blessed people – we invoke Allah *the Almighty* to make us among them – s/he fully recognises that they are happy and delighted people, as their faces clearly show the signs and the manifestations of bliss.

Moreover, He *the Almighty* says: ‘They will be served a sealed nectar, its seal [perfumed with] a fragrant herb.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 25-26) If we ponder on His saying: ‘They will be served a sealed nectar...’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 25) we find that He *Glorified is He* does not say, ‘They drink a sealed nectar,’ because some youths serve it to them, a fact which is deduced from His saying: ‘Round about them shall go youths never altering in age, With goblets and ewers and a cup of pure drink.’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 17-18)

The nectar is the purified drink which is clarified of any impurity, and, here, it refers to wine. The sealing of that nectar indicates that no one has ever touched it, signifying its complete, perfect preservation. It is wonderful that the seal of that drink has no tops like the bottles we are familiar with; rather, its top and seal are perfumed with a fragrant herb. With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Its seal [perfumed with] a fragrant herb,’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 26) the nectar is at the optimal level of purification and is preserved until its owner removes the seal by him/herself. Further, its top is perfumed with a fragrant herb.

Then the context refers to the ultimate objective and purpose for the existence of this reward, saying: ‘...let those who strive, strive for this.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 26) This verse means that the people should strive to reach that pleasure, which the previous verses illustrated. This is the true objective after which the people should strive, instead of striving for giving short measure or collecting the fleeting properties of the worldly life. So, the true field of striving is doing the righteous deeds that will ultimately allow us to get the pleasure of the Hereafter. This is the happy, delightful objective. This command of striving for the bliss of paradise comes after presenting two bargains: the bargain of the wicked people which is failing, losing, degrading and disgracing; and the bargain of the good people which, by contrast, is profitable and delightful. Allah *the Almighty* mentions the bargain of the good after that of the wicked, so that its effect on the soul motivates us to follow the good people’s way and to yearn to reach the delightful objective.

The Arabic word *al-Munafasa* means to strive to get a precious object and to reach it before other people; so, it entails effort and seriousness. It requires that the people should spare no effort to be one of the righteous or

to be like them, without harming anyone. Here, we note that there is a difference between *Ghibta* (to wish to have the like of someone's blessings without wishing that s/he loses them) and envy. Striving should not be based on foolish hope without working and pursuing the means of reaching the objective, as is the case of some foolish people who have no ambition and make no endeavour.

We have to differentiate between racing for the affairs of the worldly life and that of the Hereafter. Racing for a worldly pleasure entails striving for a limited object; if one obtained it, the others will be deprived of it and vice versa. By contrast, racing for the pleasures of the Hereafter constitutes striving for unending bliss, and all the racers are winners in that race. All of them have a share in the pleasures, as one's share does not decrease or prevent the other's share. This is because they all get their reward from a Treasury that does not run out, as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'What is with you passes away and what is with Allah is enduring...' (*an-Nahl*: 96).

Then, the verses describe the sealed nectar once again, saying: '...mixed with the water of *Tasnim*.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 27) The Arabic word *Mizaj* refers to what is added to a drink. The Quran here addresses the Arab according to the language and the traditions they were familiar with. Those who used to drink wine were of two kinds: one drinks to lose his/her consciousness and another for delight without losing consciousness. So, the matter depends on the psychological state of the drinker. For example, if s/he has concerns and wants to forget about them, s/he would ask the barman to bring the wine unmixed. But if s/he drinks for delight, s/he asks the barman to mix it with water, as water reduces its bitterness so that it does not make the drinker lose his/her consciousness. In this connection, the Arab poets expatiate in describing wine. For example, Hassan ibn Thabit said,

I refused the drink you gave me as it is mixed  
with water; I feel sad, so bring it unmixed  
Both are taken from grapes, but give me  
the one with the bitterest taste.

These verses of poetry describe the one who wants the wine unmixed to make him/her lose consciousness. This is the description of wine in the worldly life. As for wine in the Hereafter, it is mixed with *Tasnim*, which is a lofty drink. This clearly indicates that wine in the Hereafter is mixed, even though: ‘...There shall be no trouble in it...’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 47). It neither affects the mind nor intoxicates it.

The word *Tasnim* is derived from the words *Sinam*, which is the top part of anything like the hump of the camel, a meaning which is crystal clear in the Prophetic Hadith which reads: ‘The head of the matter is Islam, its pillar is the prayer and its peak is *jihad*.’<sup>(1)</sup> So, the intended meaning of this verse is that wine in the Hereafter is mixed with the loftiest drink in paradise. Then Allah *the Almighty* explains the meaning of *Tasnim*, saying: ‘...a spring from which those brought near will drink.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 28) It is a spring that gushes forth from the top part of paradise. We know for sure that water springs come from beneath the earth, and we drink from it with cups and goblets. As for the spring in paradise, it gushes forth from on high and we do not drink from it but rather by it. It is as if the goblets are the spring itself. This is an amazing image that we are unable to perceive, as it is far beyond our imagination and factual realities. However, we have the rule that facilitates the acceptance of the unseen matters, which is the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘So no soul knows what is hidden for them of that which will refresh the eyes; a reward for what they did.’ (*as-Sajda*: 17)

Another possible interpretation for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...a spring from which those brought near will drink’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 28) is that the people of paradise are not drinking to quench their thirst but rather to enjoy themselves. This is due to the fact that they neither eat out of hunger nor drink out of thirst; rather, they eat and drink for mere delight and pleasure.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Mu‘adh ibn Jabal Allah be pleased with him. See Ahmad, Musnad, 6/220; ‘Abd ibn Humayd, Musnad, Hadith no. 112; At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2616; Ibn Abu Usama, Zawaid Musnad Al-Harith, Hadith no. 12.*

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا كَانُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا يَضْحَكُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِهِمْ يَتَغَامَزُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾  
 وَإِذَا انْقَلَبُوا إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِمْ انْقَلَبُوا فَكِهِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ وَإِذَا رَأَوْهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّ هَٰؤُلَاءِ لَضَالُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾  
 وَمَا أُرْسِلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِظِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾ فَالْيَوْمَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ يَضْحَكُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ عَلَىٰ الْأَرَائِكِ  
 يَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ هَلْ تُؤِثُّبَ الْكُفَّارُ مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

The wicked used to laugh at the believers [29] they would wink at one another when the believers passed by them [30] joke about them when they got back to their own people [31] and say, when they saw them, ‘These people are misguided’ [32] though they were not sent to be their keepers [33] so today the believers are laughing at the disbelievers [34] as they sit on couches, gazing around [35] Have the disbelievers [not] been repaid for their deeds? [36]  
 (The Quran, *al-Mutaffifin*: 29 - 36)

In the very beginning of this chapter in question, Allah *Glorified is He* presents to us a kind of material pain in the issue of giving short measure and weight as well as the domination of the dignitaries and the powerful people over the weak one with regard to the latter’s provisions and livelihood. Now, at the end of the chapter, He *Glorified is He* gives us another picture about the psychological, spiritual pain. In this picture, we have the disbelievers with their power, domination, honour and conceitedness on one side, and the weak, poor and impoverished believers - who could not defend themselves or confront the disbelievers’ harm - on the other side. The disbelievers, falsely, were the uppermost, while the believers were oppressed. The one who has the uppermost always despises the one lower than him/her. When falsehood gains power, we always see it boasting about itself before the truth.

The verse in question portrays an accurate picture for us, allowing us to perceive even the wink of the eye: ‘The wicked used to laugh at the believers—they would wink at one another when the believers pass by them.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29-30) This means that the disbelievers used to mock and make fun of the believers. We notice here that the Quranic style draws a comparison between the wicked and the believers in order to recognize that disbelief constitutes the major crime and the high treason.

Employing the past form 'used to' indicates that the statement is about past occurrences, signifying that mocking the believers that happened in the past would not happen to them in the future. If He *the Almighty* had said, 'The wicked laughed at the believers,' this would have meant that they would keep laughing at the believers even in the future. That is why the expression 'used to' is employed here, as it denotes that the past action will not continue to occur in the future. This was a glad tiding for the believers about the end of the disbelievers' mockery and that they would be guided to the Faith and the Right Way. At that point, they would not laugh at the believers, as they themselves would be believers.

We also notice that the verb 'laugh at' is employed in the present form along with the expression 'used to.' That present form is used to recall the act of mockery and its psychological pain - as if it is happening to the believers right now. He *the Almighty* wants us to perceive that action as happening before us, not as a mere statement.

Laughter is a feeling whose reality cannot be described. Even with the scientific advancements we have witnessed, we do not know the organ or the psychological state that makes man laugh. That is why it is one of the matters that is especially attributed to Allah *the Almighty* as He partly veiled it by the Unseen so that no one knows except Him *Glorified is He*. In this regard, He *Glorified is He* says: 'And that He it is Who makes (men) laugh and makes (them) weep; And that He it is Who causes death and gives life.' (*an-Najm*: 43-44) Further, laughter is one of the distinctive features of the human being, to the extent that the philosophers distinguished him/her from other animals, saying, 'Man is a laughing animal.' This special feature of laughter means that the human mind cannot reach the level of knowing its reality or nature.

The Arabic language has encompassed these facts and used two verbs to describe laughter: *Dahika* and *Tadahak*. The latter refers to the one whose laughter is a matter of affectation, that is, it is neither natural nor spontaneous. Such a person laughs only with his/her outer organs that s/he can control, but in reality s/he is not laughing. An example for this is found in the poetry of 'Umar ibn Rabi'a:

They affected laughter after saying to her  
 You are beautiful in the eye of your lover

When Allah *the Almighty* tells us about the laughter of the disbelievers, He *Glorified is He* does not say that they brought it about, because they did not pretend to laugh. In fact, they were really laughing at the believers, and their feelings and sensations towards them were real. It is as if the disbelievers' mockery and ridicule were an inherent quality in them. The only reason for that is the encrustation of their hearts which rendered it blind to the truth.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'They would wink at one another when the believers passed by them.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 30) The wink is the action of the eye which is done stealthily by the eyelid. One shows this mocking wink to his/her friend and hides it from the mocked enemy; otherwise, it is an apparent movement. That is why when He *Glorified is He* portrays the action of laughter on the part of the disbelievers, He *the Almighty* made it absolute while the action of wink is restricted to the time when the believers pass by them. They wink to each other stealthily to not allow the believer to see them. It is as if the Quranic style clarifies two pictures of mockery: one was unperceivable to the believers, which is the disbelievers' laughter at them in their gatherings and meetings. The second was perceivable to them: when they passed by the disbelievers, the latter winked at one another. It is as if the believers became an object of mockery and ridicule.

The exegetes discuss the reference of the pronoun in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...passed by them.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 30) They say that the proof is in the previous verse: 'The wicked used to laugh at the believers.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29) The wicked are those who laughed and the believers were the object of that laughter. So, with regard to His saying: '...passed by them,' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 30) this action is attributed to the wicked people, that is, they pass by the believers. In other words, those who laughed are the ones who passed by, as He *the Almighty* says afterwards: '[They] joke about them when they got back to their own people.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 31) However, this does not negate the possibility that it is the believers who pass by the disbelievers; the reference of the pronoun makes both of the two interpretations possible. Anyway, it is the disbelievers who mocked the believers.



The verses here differentiate between those who fall in sin and evil but then regret their actions, and the one who keeps on following falsehood and boasting about his/her sin. Here, after the wicked made fun of the believers and harmed them in various ways, they: ‘...joke about them when they got back to their own people.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 31) So, when they return to their own people, they boast about their actions of ridiculing and mocking fun of the believers. According to another standard mode of recitation, the word *Fkihin* is recited as *Fakihin*, which means that the wicked feel happy and glad, saying, ‘We have done such and such to the believers today.’

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...and say, when they saw them, “These people are misguided,”’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 32) the closer meaning to the context of the verses is that the wicked people accuse the believers of being misguided. In the disbelievers’ eye, they have been misguided because they abandoned the religion of their fathers and forefathers. With regard to His saying: ‘...though they were not sent to be their keepers,’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 33) it means that the wicked are not the keepers of the believers, nor are they in charge of recording their deeds. The opposite meaning could be that the believers were sent as keepers for the disbelievers to record their deeds or declare them as misguided because they deny the Call in the first place.

Then, at the end of the chapter, the context draws our attention to the oppressed believers that the disbelievers made fun of. It offers them solace, condolence and alleviation for the ridicule and the mockery they suffered, saying: ‘...so today the believers are laughing at the disbelievers.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 34) The word ‘today’ here refers to the Day of Judgment when all the people will stand before the Lord of the Worlds. Thus, the recompense fits the deed. As the disbelievers laughed at the believers in the worldly life, the believers will laugh at them in the Hereafter, but there is a great difference between the essence of the two actions at that time. Laughing in the worldly life is fleeting, temporal and circumstantial, whereas the one who laughs in the Hereafter enjoys it eternally, as the Hereafter is the everlasting life. That is why it is said, ‘The one who laughs last, laughs longest.’ Indeed, the believers will laugh at the disbelievers on the Day of Judgment when they will dwell in the blissful paradise, while the disbelievers are thrown into the

blazing Hellfire, as Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...so today the believers are laughing at the disbelievers as they sit on couches, gazing around.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 34-35) So, they, i.e. the believers will look at the pleasures in the paradise, and they will also enjoy seeing Allah’s Countenance.

When Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Have the disbelievers [not] been repaid for their deeds?!’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 36) it is as if He *the Almighty* wants to show the contentment of the believers, saying to them, ‘Have We not now punished the disbelievers for their sins?’ This offers them solace and elevates their position and rank with Allah *the Almighty*. It is as if He *Glorified is He* mentions the deeds of the disbelievers in this chapter to reassure the believers who are exposed to mockery in all times and places, saying to them, ‘Remain steadfast in following the true Path and be reassured of Allah’s support for you, as you are under His care and sight.’ This reassurance is sufficient for the believers.

Before leaving this chapter, we should mention a stylistic hint which is the accurate expression in His saying: ‘Have the disbelievers [not] been repaid for their deeds?’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 36) This expression itself mocks at the disbelievers and reproaches them. The Arabic verb *Yuthib* (to reward) is used here. It is as if He *the Almighty* says, ‘Could We not reward the disbelievers for their actions?’ So, the verb ‘to reward’ is used instead of ‘to punish’ to make fun of them, as in His saying: ‘...so give them the [good] news of a painful torment.’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 24)

This manner of expression is called ‘shattering the hope’, that is, after someone hopes to get something, s/he gets depressed for being deprived of it. This is a kind of punishment in itself; that is why they use it in prisons. The jailers prevent the imprisoned from water until s/he becomes very thirsty. Then they approach with a cup of water for him/her, but then spill it. This expression is also used in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...and if they cry for water, they shall be given water like molten brass which will scald their faces...’ (*al-Kahf*: 29). We seek refuge in Him *the Almighty* from His Wrath, Punishment and His servant’s evil deeds.

the chapter of

***al-Inshiqaq***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Inshiqaq*<sup>(1)</sup>



**When the sky is ripped apart [1] obeying its Lord  
as it rightly must [2] (The Quran, *al-Inshiqaq*: 1-2)**

The context of the chapter of *al-Inshiqaq* is in harmony with the previous chapters. The chapter of *al-Infitar* talks about the noble Angels who write down the deeds of people. Then, the chapter of *al-Mutaffifin* discusses the written object, that is, the book of the wicked, which is in *Sijjin*, and the book of the good, which is in *Illiyin*. Here, in the chapter of *al-Inshiqaq*, another account about the documentation of the deeds is added. It tells that the good people's book will be given in the right hand and its owner will receive an easy reckoning. Moreover, the wicked people's book will be given in the left hand or from behind the back, and his/her owner will be recompensed severely. Thus, if we carefully ponder on all the chapters of the Quran, we find that they are in harmony with each other.

The chapter of *al-Inshiqaq* agrees with that of *at-Takwir* and *al-Infitar* in starting with conditional clauses. What is new here is that there is no apparent result for these conditional clauses. In the chapter of *at-Takwir*, the result of the conditional clauses is: '...then every soul will know what it has brought about,' (*at-Takwir*: 14) and in the chapter of *al-Infitar*, it is: '...each soul will

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(1) The chapter of *al-Inshiqaq* is number 84 in the Quranic order. It consists of 25 verses, and it is unanimously agreed upon, according to Al-Qurtubi, that it was revealed in Mecca. It was revealed after the chapter of *al-Mutaffifin* and before that of *at-Tin*. See Al-Qurtubi, *Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran*, 19/267; As-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan Fi 'Ulum Al-Quran*, 1/223.

know what it has done and what it has left undone.’ (*al-Infitar*: 5) By contrast, in the chapter in question there is no result for the conditional phrases. Why? Scholars say that we do by those results mentioned in the chapters of *at-Takwir* and *al-Infitar*. In other words, the results mentioned in the previous similar chapters make it unnecessary to repeat them in the chapter in question. This is one of the stylistic features of the Quranic manner of expression that gives the mind the chance to reflect and ponder on the meaning. Then, the mind can deduce it by itself and proceed eagerly to recite the Quran. Thus, this expression provokes the mind to think, as in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘(All) people are a single nation; so Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He revealed with them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people in that in which they differed...’ (*al-Baqara*: 213)

The reflecting reader should ask, ‘If the people were a single nation and there were no differences between them, then why did Allah send the Prophets?! Why does He say: “...in that in which they differed...”?’ (*al-Baqara*: 213) As a matter of fact, the sentence: ‘...so Allah raised prophets...’ (*al-Baqara*: 213) is not related to His saying: ‘(All) people are a single nation ...’ (*al-Baqara*: 213). Rather, it is related to an omitted sentence, which is, ‘They differed after being one nation.’ This omission is understood from the subsequent sentence: ‘...in that in which they differed...’ (*al-Baqara*: 213). So, this sentence makes the meaning clearer even though there is an omitted sentence.

Likewise, the conditional clauses in the chapters of *al-Takwir* and *al-Infitar* give a complete picture of the events of the Day of Judgment and the mighty alteration that will take place in the whole universe. As these two chapters mention the result of the conditional clauses, we can employ our minds to apply this result to the conditional clauses in the chapter in question. As there are many possible interpretations, understanding the meaning will be clearer. If the result were mentioned, the perceptions of the meaning would be defined and narrow, whereas vagueness provokes many perceptions.

We can also consider the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘You humans...’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 6) and the subsequent verses the result of the conditional clauses. That is to say, ‘When the sky is ripped apart...the believer will be

given his/her book in his/her right hand and will have an easy reckoning, and the disbeliever will be given his/her book from behind and will have a severe reckoning.’

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘When the sky is ripped apart.’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 1), the ripping apart is also mentioned in His saying: ‘And on the day when the heaven shall burst asunder with the clouds...’ (*al-Furqan*: 25). So, we believe in this universal fact that will come to pass on the Day of Judgment. We have nothing to do with how this would happen; we should only firmly believe that the sky will break its monotony and be altered to something we are not familiar with. Further, the whole universe will break its monotony and order that we know.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says about the sky: ‘...obeying its Lord as it rightly must.’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 2) This verse means that the sky listened and obeyed its Lord’s Command. So, the sky is described here as having an attentive ear. With regard to listening and obeying the Divine Commands, the creatures are of two kinds: the first one listens and has the choice to obey or disobey; the other kind listens but has no free will to disobey. The sky belongs to the latter kind, as it has no freedom of choice; once it listens to the command of its Lord, it unquestioningly obeys it. It immediately obeys the command of its Lord, Who is fully Able to effectuate His command, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: ‘...so He said to it and to the earth: Come both, willingly or unwillingly. They both said: We come willingly.’ (*Fussilat*: 11) This is because the sky and the earth are subjected to the command of their Creator.

That is why He *the Almighty* says here: ‘...as it rightly must.’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 2) This means that the sky should listen and heed Allah’s Command, as it rightly must obey and submit to Him, *Glorified is He*. This is because it, by the nature of its creation, is subjected and compliant with His commands. When He *the Almighty* commands it to be ripped apart, it will obey immediately.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ ﴿٣﴾ وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ ﴿٤﴾ وَأَذْنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ ﴿٥﴾

**When the earth is levelled out [3] casts out its contents, and  
becomes empty [4] obeying its Lord as it rightly must [5]  
(The Quran, *al-Inshiqaq*: 3 - 5)**

After telling us about the manifestations of the alteration of the universal order in the sky, Allah *the Almighty* tells us about the alteration of the earthly order. He *the Almighty* created the earth and made it even to be suitable for man's life on it, as He *the Almighty* says elsewhere: '...and the earth, too, He spread out.' (*an-Nazi'at*: 30) However, in the Hereafter, it will become suitable for the Gathering, so it will be vast to encompass all the creatures that will be gathered. Consequently, He *the Almighty* says: '...when the earth is levelled out.' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 3) It is as if the earth will be pulled from its sides to extend after the removal of the mountains and hills. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'And the mountains shall be as loosened wool.' (*al-Qari'a*: 5) He *the Almighty* further illustrates this meaning, saying: 'Then leave it a plain, smooth level, You shall not see therein any crookedness or unevenness.' (*Ta Ha*: 106-107)

Scholars say that after the earth extends, it hardly encompasses the gathered people who would stand in a state of crowdedness, as the place is still narrow. It seems that this state is intended because standing on the Day of Judgment is not meant to be restful, but rather difficult. If one wanted to sit, s/he would not be able to do so except with the permission of Allah *the Almighty*.

With regard to the saying of Allah, *Glorified is He*: '...casts out its contents...' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 4) it means that the earth will cast out the dead people inside it, or the treasure, blessings and secrets inside it. His saying: '...and becomes empty.' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 4) affirms that the earth will cast out all its contents, leaving nothing inside it, however little it might be. This is quite similar to the case when a policeman searches a person and s/he empties his/her pockets before starting the search. This means that the searched person has nothing to hide.

As the sky obeys and submits to its Creator, the earth does the same, as He *the Almighty* says: '...obeying its Lord as it rightly must.' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 5) This verse conveys the same meaning we have discussed previously. The earth rightly must listen and obey. Another possible interpretation is that He *the Almighty*



will make it obedient through the power of submission and subjection that He *the Almighty* placed in it.

Afterwards, the context addresses all human beings and his/her genus whom Allah *the Almighty* honoured. He *the Almighty* subjected all that is in the universe to humans and made them His Vicegerent on earth. So, He *the Almighty* subsequently says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدًّا فَمَلِّقِيهِ ﴿٦﴾ فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ ﴿٧﴾  
فَسَوْفَ يُحَاسَبُ حِسَابًا يَسِيرًا ﴿٨﴾ وَنَقْلَبُ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا ﴿٩﴾ وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ وَرَاءَ  
ظَهْرِهِ ﴿١٠﴾ فَسَوْفَ يَدْعُوا ثُبُورًا ﴿١١﴾ وَيَصْلَىٰ سَعِيرًا ﴿١٢﴾ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فِي أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا ﴿١٣﴾

**You humans, toiling laboriously towards your Lord, will meet Him [6] whoever is given his record in his right hand [7] will have an easy reckoning [8] and return to his people well pleased [9] but whoever is given his record from behind his back [10] will cry out for destruction [11] he will burn in the blazing Fire [12] He used to live among his people well pleased [13] (The Quran, *al-Inshiqaq*: 6 - 13)**

In the chapter of *al-Infitar*, we have previously talked about the breaking apart of the sky, the scattering of the stars, the boiling up of the seas and the turning of the graves inside out. Man is addressed by Allah's saying: 'Mankind, what has lured you away from Allah?' (*al-Infitar*: 6); and His saying: '...you humans, toiling laboriously towards your Lord, will meet Him.' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 6) He *the Almighty* addresses man because s/he is the center and the objective of the universe. In both the above verses, the Attribute of Lordship is mentioned along with addressing all the humanity. It is as if He *the Almighty* wants to be lenient to His servants, so He *Glorified is He* addresses them gently, saying: '...you humans, toiling laboriously towards your Lord, will meet Him.' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 6)

'Toiling' means to strive and spare no effort to reach the objective. Such toil is also accompanied with hardship to the extent that it leaves a noticeable effect on the person because of tiredness and stress. For example, blue-collar workers may have tough hands or bent backs as a result of carrying heavy objects. It is as if they overburden themselves to earn a living. That is why

when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* held the hand of one of his Companions and found it rough, he said, ‘Allah and His Messenger love this hand.’ Why? This is because its owner seeks a lawful provision and is keen on gaining it. In this regard, a poet said,

My lifetime is like two hours; I toil in one  
to seek provision, and I would die in the second

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* addresses all people, be they believers or disbelievers, saying, ‘You will inevitably reach by your deeds to one single objective. You are heading towards your Lord from the day of your birth until the time of your death.’ Man’s property in that journey is the good deeds with which s/he would meet with his/her Lord. One will be held accountable for his/her actions and that is why s/he should pay heed to his/her actions. This fact is applicable to all people and it determines all the secondary actions.

The verses then show us that the objective divides the people according to their toiling into striving for Allah *the Almighty* by doing good deeds sincerely for His Sake in order to be saved in the Hereafter; and toiling towards Him by evil deeds and striving after the worldly life, preferring the fleeting life to the everlasting one. So, the verses read: ‘...whoever is given his record in his right hand will have an easy reckoning and return to his people well pleased.’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 7-9) These verses refer to the people of obedience who are given their record in their right hand. They will have an easy reckoning and return happily to their people.

By contrast, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...but whoever is given his record from behind his back will cry out for destruction—he will burn in the blazing Fire.’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 10-12) These verses show the fate of the people of disbelief and disobedience. They will cry out for woe and destruction to befall them in order to be relieved from the punishment, as they will enter the hellfire and suffer its extreme heat. Afterwards, the verses mention the reason for their awful fate, saying: ‘He used to live among his people well pleased. He thought he would never return [to his Lord].’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 13-14) They wrongly thought during the worldly life that they would not return to Allah *the Almighty* or that they would be held accountable for their deeds. Thus, their woeful destination in the deep bottom of the hell is the outcome of their wrongful

thinking. Another possible interpretation is that they thought they will not return to the state they had in the worldly life where they enjoyed many pleasures.

The one who ponders on these verses finds that they give us a picture of the absolute Divine Justice. Logically, all the people should be held accountable. Even if the person reaches a lofty rank in righteousness, there are still some deeds in his/her record about which s/he should be questioned. However, it is man's toil and striving that determine the way of his/her reckoning, be it easy or difficult. Some people's reckoning will be confined to presenting the deeds in order to recognize them and compare them to Allah's Graces on him/her. He *the Almighty* would say to him/her, 'My servant, you have done such and such, while I have bestowed such and such on you.' In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to 'Aisha, 'This means only the presentation of the accounts, but whoever will be argued with about his account will certainly be punished.' Thus, we should only fear being questioned about our deeds during the reckoning. As for the presentation of the deeds, it is a way of manifesting Allah's favour on us, like when He *the Almighty* says to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Allah pardon you! Why did you give them leave...' (*at-Tawba*: 43) This is the easy reckoning whose signs start when one is given his/her record in the right hand. That is why the right hand is always the sign of goodness and peace.

The opposite picture is that of the disbelievers who violate Allah's Way of Guidance. They will also be reckoned with justly but with difficulty. The Quran expresses that the severity and hardship of the reckoning will reach the extent that the one reckoned in this way will cry out for destruction and woe to fall on him/her in order to alleviate the punishment s/he suffers. It is as if s/he says, 'My woe, befall on me for this is your time to come.' A poet has expressed this meaning perfectly, saying,

How terrible it is to regard death as the cure  
For your illness, and death as your dearest wish

Man does not wish for death except when his/her situation is worse than death. Moreover, the Quran portrays this meaning in His saying: '...On the Day when every person will see what their own hands have sent ahead for them, when the disbeliever will say, "If only I were dust!"' (*an-Naba'*: 40)

The sign of this shameful fate is that the record is given to its owner from behind the back. In another verse, it is clearly stated that s/he is given it in the left hand. These two pictures express the disgrace and the shame of the one whom the Angel gives their record in the left hand, which is an evil omen, or from behind the back. This is because the Angel does not want to see the ugly face of that person or s/he may be embarrassed from the Angel, so s/he takes the book from behind the back.

We notice that the verses talk about the gladness of the people of faith at their record which they are given in the right hand. Further, they feel happy for having an easy reckoning that ultimately leads them to the blissful paradise – this is the true happiness in the Hereafter. Then the verses talk about the happiness of the people of falsehood in the worldly life. Let them feel happy as much as possible as they can, for there is no share for them in the happiness of the Hereafter. Here, we should draw a comparison between the happiness of the disbelievers in the worldly life and that of the believers in the Hereafter. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: ‘They joke about them when they got back to their own people.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 31) This means that the disbelievers make fun of the believers in the worldly life. By contrast, the believer, who is given his/her book in the right hand, will be happy and return to his people well pleased. Thus, there is a far greater difference between the happiness of the disbelievers and that of the believers.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

إِنَّهُ ظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ يَحْجُورَ ﴿١٤﴾ بَلَغَ إِنَّ رَبَّهُ كَانَ بِهِ بَصِيرًا ﴿١٥﴾ فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالْشَّفَقِ ﴿١٦﴾  
وَاللَّيْلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ ﴿١٨﴾ لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَنْ طَبَقٍ ﴿١٩﴾

**He thought he would never return [to his Lord] [14] indeed he will! His Lord was watching him [15] I swear by the glow of sunset [16] by the night and what it covers [17] by the full moon [18] you will progress from stage to stage [19]**  
(The Quran, *al-Inshiqaq*: 14 - 19)

The ranks of realizing the matters are as follows: knowledge, imitation, ignorance, doubt, conjecture and delusion. Knowledge is the highest rank among them all. The people of the Book differed after the coming of the

knowledge to them. Allah *the Almighty* does not say that they differed because they were at the rank of imitation, conjecture, delusion, ignorance or doubt. Rather, He *the Almighty* says that they differed after being given the knowledge, the highest rank of realization. Conjecture is delusional; so, He *Glorified is He* reminds them that it is not right to think that living in the worldly life is better for them. This thought is a mere guessing and conjecture that does not reach the level of certitude.

Allah *the Almighty* gives us a practical example of delusional conjecture, saying in the chapter of *al-Fajr*: '[The nature of] man is that, when his Lord tries him through honour and blessings, he says, "My Lord has honoured me," but when He tries him through the restriction of his provision, he says, "My Lord has humiliated me."' (al-Fajr: 16) The man who thinks that richness is an honour and impoverishment and restriction of the provision are humiliation does not realize the fact which is found in His saying: 'Nay...' (al-Fajr: 17). This means that man's conjecture is not true, for being wealthy is not a sign of being honoured and being poor is not a sign of being humiliated. Both of these conjectures are wrong.

This is also the case with the one who: '...thought he would never return [to his Lord].' (al-Inshiqaq: 14) S/he thinks s/he will not return to Allah *the Almighty* and will not be resurrected after death. This one who was given his/her record from behind the back wrongly thought that s/he would not be returned to Him *the Almighty* and would not be resurrected after death. That is why s/he had not paid heed to the seriousness of committing sins. S/he was neither hoping for a reward nor fearing a punishment.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Indeed he will! His Lord was watching him.' (al-Inshiqaq: 15) The Arabic particle *Bala* means 'yes', but it is used with the negative sentences. Here, it negates the conjecture that man will not return to Allah *the Almighty*. In fact, s/he will return to Him *Glorified is He*. So, the particle '*Bala*' negates the truthfulness of man's conjecture. Unlike the particle *Na'am* (yes), the particle *Bala* is used with the negative sentences. For example, He *the Almighty* says: 'And they say: None shall enter the garden (or paradise) except he who is a Jew or a Christian. These are their vain desires. Say: Bring your proof if you are truthful. Yes! Whoever submits

himself entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good (to others) he has his reward from his Lord...' (*al-Baqara*: 111-112). So, the particle *Bala* (yes) means that their statement is totally wrong. Likewise, it is used in the verse in question to negate man's conjecture that: '...he would never return [to his Lord].' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 14) So, man's conjecture is wrong for s/he will for sure be returned along with all the people to Allah *the Almighty* whether they believed or disbelieved in the Resurrection.

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Indeed he will! His Lord was watching him.' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 15) He *Glorified is He* chooses the Attribute of Lordship, even though the context here befits that of Divinity with its Omnipotence that compels all the people to return back and be resurrected. The Attribute of Lordship is used instead of that of Divinity even in the case of returning of the denier of the Resurrection. It is as if He *the Almighty* says to him/her, 'O heedless man, I am Your Lord and Creator Who provides for you. Despite your denial, I am still your Lord Who can make you repent your disbelief, denial and rejection.'

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...Indeed he will! His Lord was watching him,' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 15) it means that man's Lord is watching him/her; He fully knows his/her affairs and nothing is hidden from Him *Glorified is He*. That is why s/he can never find a place to escape or hide from Him *the Almighty* as: '...Allah sees the servants.' (*Al-'Imran*: 15) So, He *Glorified is He* is watching all man's movements. In another verse, He *the Almighty* says: '...Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer.' (*an-Nisa*': 1) The observer is the one who looks intentionally at something. In this sense, Allah *the Almighty* is not only seeing but also observing us.

Afterwards, He *the Almighty* says: 'I swear by the glow of sunset...' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 16). In the verses in question, He *the Almighty* wants to affirm a fact that does not need an Oath to affirm, as it is perfectly obvious and clear. However, were He *the Almighty* to swear about it, He *Glorified is He* would swear by the glow of sunset. The Arabic word *Ash-Shafaq* refers to the redness that remains on the horizon after the sunset, or it is the whiteness that follows that redness. However, Mujahid says that it refers to all the daytime. So, it is possible that He *the Almighty* swears by all the daytime through

mentioning one part of it. The one who reflects on the glow of the sunset along with the previous opinions of the exegetes will find the true picture of *Ash-Shafaq*. It gathers between the effect of the daytime, which is light, and the effect of the sun, which is the redness.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...by the night and what it covers.’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 17) This Divine Oath by the night is mentioned in many verses of the Quran, as in His saying: ‘By the enshrouding night.’ (*al-Layl*: 1) In fact, there is a chapter in the Quran called *al-Layl* (the Night), while there is no chapter by the name ‘the day.’ This is because the night is the time when the worshippers offer their acts of worship to Allah *the Almighty*. When the night covers the world with its darkness, tranquility subsequently comes. In other verses, He *the Almighty* swears by the night, saying: ‘...and by the night when it grows still,’ (*ad-Duha*: 2); and ‘...by the passing night.’ (*al-Fajr*: 4) The night covers the world as it moves slowly and tranquilly, spreading its darkness that shrouds the lightness of the day bit by bit.

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* describes the night by another feature, apart from moving slowly and shrouding the world, which is: ‘...by the night and what it covers.’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 17) So, what is the meaning of *Wasaq*? It refers to what the night encircles, covers and encompasses; it shrouded all what was in the daytime. That is because when the night comes, everything returns to its home. It covers the trees, the mountains, the seas and the whole earth with its darkness. During night, Allah’s creatures gather together after being scattered during the daytime. The word *Wasaq* connotes gathering and that is why the large amount of food that can be measured or weighed or put in a container is called *Wasaq*.

So, as Allah *the Almighty* swears by the glow of the sunset, which is a part of the day close to the coming of the night, He *the Almighty* swears by the night. Then He *Glorified is He* swears by the most important phenomenon in the night, which is the moon, saying: ‘...by the full moon.’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 18) The Arabic word *Al-Itisaaq* is the time when the moon is full in the sky. This particular period of time is called the ‘white days’; it occurs when the sky becomes bright with the white light of the moon. This takes place on the thirteenth, the fourteenth and the fifteenth days of the lunar month. So *Al-Itisaaq* is

the time when the moon is full, but Al-Hassan Al-Basri holds the position that it refers to its light when the reflection of the sunlight makes it full of light.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'You will progress from stage to stage,' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 19) the Arabic preposition *A'n* means 'after', a meaning which is also clear in His saying: '[Allah] said, "After a little, they will surely become regretful."' (*al-Mu'minun*: 40) So, the verse in question refers to the progression from one heaven to another. Some scholars maintain that this verse refers to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that is, he would progress from one heaven to another, which has already happened in the Night Journey and Ascension. Some say it refers to the ranks of getting closer to Allah *the Almighty*. So, the meaning could be that he *peace and blessings be upon him* would progress from a condition, rank or hardship to another.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

﴿٢٠﴾ وَإِذَا قُرِئَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقُرْآنُ لَا يَسْجُدُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ فَمَا لَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

**So why do they not believe [20] Why, when the Quran is read to them, do they not prostrate themselves [to God] [21] <sup>(1)</sup>**  
**(The Quran, *al-Inshiqaq*: 20 - 21)**

The interrogation here carries the meaning of condemnation and reproach. This is a common style in the Quran. When one hears, 'Why do you not do such and such?' it means that the addressee should do it and that it is astonishing that s/he does not. This condemnatory manner of expression is only used when someone does something s/he should not do or leave a necessary action undone. Such styles mean that the believer should not receive the obligatory action according to his/her standard of what to do and what not to do.

So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'So why do they not believe?' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 20) is a condemnation and reproach for not believing in Allah, His Book, Messenger, Resurrection, Reckoning, paradise and hell. The word *Iman* means to believe in something, a meaning which is crystal clear in His saying: '...and you will not believe us though we are truthful.' (*Yusuf*: 17) This is the statement of Jacob's sons to their father.

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(1) When a Muslim reads yasjudoon (prostrate), s/he, immediately prostrate and say (subhan Rabia Al-'ala) three times and finish it as finishing any prayer.



As for His *Glorified is He* saying, ‘Why, when the Quran is read to them, do they not prostrate themselves [to Allah]?’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 21), prostration is a sign of glorification. So, the disbelievers neither glorify the Quran nor give it its due rank, which would lead to the firm belief in the One Who revealed it, that is, Allah *Glorified is He*; the one to whom it was revealed, that is, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; and the one who brought it down from Allah *the Almighty* that is, the Archangel Gabriel *peace be upon him*.

To read the Quran means to recite it, as He *the Almighty* says elsewhere: ‘And it is a Quran which We have revealed in portions so that you may read it to the people by slow degrees, and We have revealed it, revealing in portions.’ (*al-Isra*: 106) It was revealed in portions, one verse after another; however, it is astonishing that: ‘...when the Quran is read to them, they not prostrate themselves [to Allah].’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 21) Prostration is the utmost degree of submission to Allah *the Almighty*. So, when a verse requiring prostration comes, we must hastily prostrate to Him the Almighty.

It is as if the prostration of recitation constitutes a momentous affair and a great secret. The verses of prostration have spiritual power and blessings that remind us about Him the Almighty. The prostration in this verse is one among many others in the Quran. Some scholars maintain that prostration here refers to Prayer as it is part of it. So, the meaning is that they do not offer prayer.

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘No! The disbelievers reject the Quran.’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 22) It means that the disbelievers deny the Quran and do not believe in it. This is because they neither glorify it nor prostrate to the One Who revealed it down, as they consider it the fables of the ancients which were dictated to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or it is he who produced the Quran - but how come?! He *peace and blessings be upon him* was well known to them; they knew fully well that he composed neither poetry nor prose.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:



**No! The disbelievers reject the Quran [22]**  
**(The Quran, *al-Inshiqaq*: 22)**

The word 'No' here negates what was stated before it and affirms what is mentioned after it. That is to say that it is not possible that the disbelievers prostrate to Allah *the Almighty* when the Quran is recited to them, as they disbelieve in it in the first place. This denial is a kind of stubborn rejection on the part of the disbeliever, and means the rejection of an action or a saying. So, they did not only disbelieve in the Quran and the Messenger, but also denied and turned away from them.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Allah knows best what they keep hidden inside,' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 23) the expression 'Allah knows best' is mentioned in many verses, including: 'O you who believe! When believing women come to you flying, then examine them; Allah knows best their faith...' (*al-Mumtahana*: 10); 'And Allah best knows your enemies...' (*an-Nisa'*: 45); 'And when they come to you, they say: We believe; and indeed they come in with unbelief and indeed they go forth with it; and Allah knows best what they concealed.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 61); 'Allah best knows where He places His message...' (*al-An'am*: 124); 'Say: Allah knows best how long they remained; to Him are (known) the unseen things of the heavens and the earth...' (*al-Kahf*: 26); '...nor do I say about those whom your eyes hold in mean estimation (that) Allah will never grant them (any) good-- Allah knows best what is in their souls - for the most surely I should be of the unjust.' (*Hud*: 31); and '...if they contend with you, say: Allah best knows what you do.' (*al-Hajj*: 68)

So, Allah *the Almighty* knows best the faith of the heart and what the man conceals in it. Further, He *Glorified is He* knows best man's actions and the apparent and the hidden actions of the disbelievers. The formula 'to know best' is in the superlative form. It means that He *the Almighty* knows the reality of all affairs better than the people, as He perfectly well knows their real state and not their apparent form, which some people still may not see.

Therefore, He *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يُوعُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

**God knows best what they keep hidden inside [23]  
(The Quran, *al-Inshiqaq*: 23)**

This verse signifies that He *the Almighty* fully well knows what the disbelievers conceal deep inside their souls. The Arabic word *Wi'aa* ' refers to the container that includes some material objects like liquids and clothes. It is mentioned in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'So he began with their (*Aw'iatihem*) sacks before the sack of his brother, then he brought it out from his brother's sack...' (*Yusuf*: 76). The container could also be spiritual, like the heart which is the container of the sentiments and intentions. So, His saying: 'Allah knows best what they keep hidden inside,' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 23) means that He *Glorified is He* knows what the disbelievers hide in their hearts.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢٤﴾

**So give them news of a painful torment [24]  
(The Quran, *al-Inshiqaq*: 24)**

Why does Allah *the Almighty* give them the glad tidings of a painful punishment? Do the glad tidings not mean to tell someone good news about something that may happen? Yes, giving glad tidings is related to the good, delightful news, like telling the believers that they will go to the paradise. When the soul of the disbeliever hears the words, 'give the glad tidings,' it expects to hear good news and thus becomes delighted to hear something good. So, when it is said: '...so give them news of a painful torment,' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 24) a sudden, painful depression overwhelms that soul. The words 'give them the good news' raises the disbelievers' hopes, but the words 'painful punishment' shatter that hope, which increases the severity of their calamity.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

**But those who believe and do good deeds will have a never-ending reward [25] (The Quran, *al-Inshiqaq*: 25)**

Here, Allah *the Almighty* excludes the believers who do good deeds from those punished by a painful torment. The activities of life must be in harmony with the Islamic Way of Guidance. However, when these activities deviate from that Way of Guidance, then faith alone does not serve the religious cause. That is why the good deeds must be prescribed along with the belief. The good deeds are those complying with the Straight Path and the Way of Guidance. The opposite of these good deeds are the corrupt ones. The minimum degree of goodness and righteousness is to leave what is good as it is or to increase its goodness.

So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘But those who believe and do good deeds will have a never-ending reward,’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 25) means that the believers’ reward is neither ending nor reduced. As Allah *the Almighty* gives them their reward without measure, the reward will not end, but rather will be eternal and everlasting. They deserve this reward which is given without measure. If a believer is in the habit of doing a certain act of worship, but then an illness forces him/her to stop it, then the reward of that act of worship will continue to be given to him/her.

the chapter of

***al-Buruj***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Buruj*<sup>(1)</sup>

وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الْبُرُوجِ ۝ (١) وَالْيَوْمِ الْمَوْعُودِ ۝ (٢) وَشَاهِدٍ وَمَشْهُودٍ ۝ (٣)

**By the sky with its towering constellations [1]  
by the promised Day [2] by the Witness and that which  
is witnessed [3] (The Quran, *al-Buruj*: 1-3)**

The chapter of *al-Buruj*, like many other chapters in this *Juz*’ (part), starts with an Oath. Allah *the Almighty* takes an Oath by the sky and its towering constellations, which have an effect on the universal order and the laws of existence. This is an Oath taken by a tangible matter, but His saying: ‘...by the promised Day,’ (*al-Buruj*: 2) constitutes an Oath by an unseen matter, which is the Day of Judgment. It is as if He *the Almighty* proves the unseen matter by the greatness and the marvelousness of the tangible creature. Then He *the Almighty* swears, saying: ‘...by the witness and that which is witnessed.’ (*al-Buruj*: 3) The Arabic word *Shahid* ‘witness’ here refers to Friday, while *Mash-hud* ‘the witnessed’ refers to the day of ‘*Arafa*, which is witnessed by the people and the Angels.

Afterwards, the subject of these Oaths is mentioned in order that Allah *the Almighty* would relate to us one of the incidents of the conflict between belief and disbelief or the truth and falsehood. So, He *the Almighty* says:

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(1) The chapter of *Al-Buruj* is number 85 in the Quranic order. It consists of 22 verses and it is unanimously agreed upon that it was revealed in Mecca. It was revealed after the chapter of *Ash-Shams* and before that of *Al-Tin*. See As-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan fi ‘Ulum Al-Quran*, 1/36.

قَتَلَ أَصْحَابُ الْأُخْدُودِ ④ النَّارِ ذَاتِ الْوُفُودِ ⑤ إِذْ هُمْ عَلَيْهَا قُعُودٌ ⑥ وَهُمْ عَلَى مَا  
يَفْعَلُونَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ شُهُودٌ ⑦ وَمَا نَقَمُوا مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ ⑧  
الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ⑨ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ⑩

**Damned were the makers of the trench [4] the makers of the  
fuel-stoked fire! [5] They sat down [6] to watch what they  
were doing to the believers [7] Their only grievance against  
them was their faith in God, the Mighty, the Praiseworthy [8]  
to whom all control over the heavens and earth belongs:  
God is witness over all things [9] (The Quran, *al-Buruj*: 4 - 9)**

The story of *Ashab Al-'Ukhduud* (the makers of the trench) is a well-known one that took place in the past. It portrays a conflict between the truth and falsehood. The trench was a great hole that the disbelievers dug for the believers. Allah *the Almighty* clarifies its meaning and essence, saying: 'the makers of the fuel-stoked fire!' (*al-Buruj*: 5) The disbelievers set the fire in that trench and threw the believers into it, while the rest of the disbelievers were watching: 'They sat down to watch what they were doing to the believers.' (*al-Buruj*: 6-7)

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* wants to illustrate the principles of conflict between belief and disbelief. Belief is always firm in the heart of the believers, while disbelief is always deceived by its power and the weakness of the believers. The attitude of the tyrannical disbelievers towards the believers is not reasonable as violates the pure nature, let alone the religion and its laws.

We have explained the cases of conflict and the expected outcome of every case. In fact, the conflict between the truth and falsehood does not last long, because the power and the firmness of belief will shortly defeat falsehood. The second case is when the conflict is between two truths, but this case never exists in the reality, as the truth is one. Thus, there is no case in which two truths are in conflict with each other. So, there could be a conflict between two powers and we wrongly conclude, from the first observation, that both of them are right. However, a deep reflection of the matter will show us that one of them is on the false side. The last case is when there is a conflict between two falsehoods, like most of the conflicts we witness in our age. Such conflicts remain for a long time and have a destructive and



calamitous effect on the countries and the peoples. That is because none of the conflicting forces deserves Allah's Support, as both of them are holding a false stance.

Afterwards, the verses tell us about the stubbornness and obstinacy of disbelief, reading: 'Their only grievance against them was their faith in Allah, the Mighty, the Praiseworthy.' (*al-Buruj*: 8) Faith is the believer's crime in the eye of the disbelievers. All what they hated and condemned is only the believer's faith in Allah *the Almighty*. The recompense of that crime, in their opinion, was to throw the believers into the trench. This is the feature of disbelief which is deceived by its power in comparison with the oppressed believers.

Allah *the Almighty* portrays this incident by a well-known rhetoric style, which is, to affirm the praising of an object by a seemingly blameworthy quality. The word 'grievances' gives a negative connotation, so we expect the mention of a blameworthy quality after it. However, the context then mentions a praiseworthy one, which is: '...their faith in Allah, the Mighty, the Praiseworthy.' (*al-Buruj*: 8) It is the case when you say, for example, 'So and so is free from all the bad traits, except that s/he is generous.' In this way, his/her generosity is affirmed, as the listener expects a blameworthy trait but suddenly finds it praiseworthy. A colloquial proverb also conveys this meaning: 'They did not find any defect in the roses, so they said, "They have red leaves."' Does this redness constitute a defect? Of course not! Further, an Arab poet expresses that particular meaning, saying,

They are free of bad traits, but their swords

Are blunt out to fighting strong armies

Moreover, this style is used many times in the Quran, as in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Say: O followers of the Book! Do you find fault with us (for aught) except that we believe in Allah and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed before, and that most of you are transgressors?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 59) The meaning is thus that the believers' faith in Allah *the Almighty* is not a fault that incurs any punishment. If the People of the Book hate the fact that the believers believe in Allah, then the fault is in the former, not the latter. So, this style is a kind of wise argument that allows a space for the two

parties to understand each other. It is as if He *the Almighty* says gently to the people of the Book, 'The fault is yours and the corruption is in your nature and standards.' Likewise, He *the Almighty* says elsewhere: '...and they did not find fault except because Allah and His Messenger enriched them out of His grace...' (*at-Tawba*: 74).

So, with regard to the verse in question, the meaning is that the disbelieving makers of the trench hated something naturally lovable, that is, belief in Allah *the Almighty*. This indicates the corrupted mentality of the one who issued such a ruling, as he considered the good value abominable. It is as if the Quran refers to the fact that if the disbelievers reviewed all the qualities, ethics and behaviours of the believers, whom they burned, they would not find anything detestable. So, how could they throw them into the fire?! However, the tyrannical disbelief is keen on preserving its oppression, power and tyranny. It does not like to see anyone worshipping anything else, as it finds this abominable.

In the disbeliever's point of view, the believers who worship Allah *the Almighty* Alone are sinful and guilty. Even their being a people of reform, principles, ethics and good treatment do not waive their punishment. On the contrary, you see such tyrannical people overlooking all the bad traits of those who worship them, abandoning meanwhile the worship of the One, Single God. This meaning is expressed in the following line of poetry:

The faults are unperceivable to the content eye

But the discontent eye exposes the hidden faults

Most of the rulers' corruption stems from this matter. S/he considers his/her retinues and close people trustworthy and righteous, even if they were corrupt people, aggressors and thieves. All their faults are overlooked because they deal hypocritically with their master and almost offer their worship to him/her. As for the opposing people, they are labelled as extremists and corrupt even if they were righteous and have moral characters. This is the incorrect balance of many rulers.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* mentions two of His Attributes, saying: '...the Mighty, the Praiseworthy.' (*al-Buruj*: 8) So, the believers, whom the disbelievers hated their belief, seek refuge with Allah *the Almighty* the Invincible and the

Praiseworthy. Praiseworthiness indicates that He *the Almighty* is All-Benevolent and deserves to be praised for bestowing His Blessings. So, the Almightyness represents the intimidating aspect and Praiseworthiness represents the persuasive one. Everyone should choose for him/herself the aspect that suits him/her to thereby follow the Way of Allah *the Almighty*.

So, the verse in question signifies that the oppressed believers, whom the disbelievers condemned for their faith, do not seek refuge in a weak resort but rather in a Powerful, Almighty Lord Who holds sway on the whole universe and Who encompasses all the goodness under His Control. Thus, the believers are following the Right Way and the Straight Path leading to the praiseworthy destination and objective. That is because they worshipped the true God Who Alone deserves to be worshipped.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...the Mighty, the Praiseworthy’ (*al-Buruj*: 8) is not a statement without a proof, as He *Glorified is He* then says: ‘...to whom all control over the heavens and earth belongs: Allah is witness over all things.’ (*al-Buruj*: 9) His Almightyness and Invincibility are really and clearly witnessed in the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. Both the believer and the disbeliever attest to it; if man has a free will in some matters, s/he is subjected to Him *the Almighty* in some others. No one can do that except the Lord of the heavens and the earth.

We should ponder the beautiful way of expression in His saying: ‘...Allah is witness over all things.’ (*al-Buruj*: 9) This is an independent sentence and the Name ‘Allah’ is employed instead of the subject pronoun ‘He’ so that there would be no need for a reference for the pronoun. In other words, He *the Almighty* does not say, ‘He is witness over all things.’ He *the Almighty* mentions His Majestic Name ‘Allah’ with regard to the action of witnessing over all things, alluding to what has been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: ‘[They] watch what they were doing to the believers.’ (*al-Buruj*: 7) It is as if He *Glorified is He* is saying, ‘O tyrannical disbelievers, pay attention that as you have watched the believers when you threw them in the trench, I witness over all what you have done.’

The adjective *Shahid* (witness), unlike *Shahid*, expresses hyperbole as it has two meanings. It could mean that He *the Almighty* witnesses everything and

nothing is hidden from Him *Glorified is He*. The second meaning is that He *Glorified is He* is the Witness for the wrongdoers who have no witnesses. So, He *the Almighty* is the Witness of those who were wronged secretly and there is no witness or proof to substantiate the wrongdoing they suffered. Consequently, the wrongdoers should pay attention that their hidden wrongdoing that the people did not see is watched by Allah *the Almighty* from Whom nothing is hidden.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* shows the punishment of the first group, who are the disbelieving makers of the trench, saying:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَتَنُوا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا فَلَهُمْ  
عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ الْحَرِيقِ ﴿١٠﴾

**For those who persecute believing men and women,  
and do not repent afterwards, there will be the torment  
of Hell and burning [10] (The Quran, *al-Buruj*: 10)**

We notice here that Allah *the Almighty* treats the people as their Lord Who does not have any hostility against His disbelieving servant. If s/he repented, He *Glorified is He* would accept his/her repentance, as if there is nothing happened before. So, He *the Almighty* does not have a bitter enmity against His servant, like that of the people against each other. Some people would not forgive or forget even one offence, no matter how the offender tries to correct his/her mistake. By contrast, Allah *the Almighty* does not react to the actions in the way we do, for He *the Almighty* is the Creator of the actions and everything else. He *Glorified is He* neither gets benefit from an act of obedience nor is harmed by an act of disobedience. He just wants His creatures to be in the best state.

Out of His Mercy towards His servants, He *Glorified is He* accepts their repentance. If that door of repentance was closed, people would keep on committing evil deeds and lose hope in salvation. Consequently, He *the Almighty* shatters the hope of both the disbelievers and the tyrants in receiving His Mercy. So, He *Glorified is He* opened the gate of repentance for them even after persecuting the believing men and women. This is because He does not want the disbeliever to keep on his/her disbelief, nor does He want the tyrant

to persist in his/her tyranny. This is due to the fact that repentance wipes out the actions done before it. That is why when the people said to 'Umar, 'This is Wahshiy (who killed *Hamza*, Prophet Muhammad's uncle),' he replied, 'What is the problem with him after being guided to Faith.'

We should reflect on the accuracy of the Quranic way of expression and its suitability for the context in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...there will be the torment of hell and burning.' (*al-Buruj*: 10) The Arabic word *Al-Hariq* (burning) is one of the kinds of punishment in the hell, but it is especially mentioned in this context by way of comparison with: '...the fuel-stoked fire.' (*al-Buruj*: 5) The makers of the trench set the fire in the trench and threw the believers into it, which is why the burning torment that these disbelievers suffer is the just recompense for their action, as the punishment fits the crime.

Another possible explanation for mentioning the 'torment of burning' in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...there will be the torment of hell and burning...' (*al-Buruj*: 10) is that the hell has many kinds of punishments apart from burning by the fire, like the extreme cold. So, it is as if He *the Almighty* gathered many kinds of punishments for them. Or, we can say that there is a punishment for disbelief and another severer one for the disbelievers who persisted in their disbelief and persecuted the believing men and women. This is because the one who only disbelieved and the one who disbelieved and persecuted the believing men and women on account of their religion are not equal. For the first group, there is the torment of hell as recompense for their disbelief; and for the second group, there is the torment of the hell and the burning as recompense for persecuting the believing men and women.

As the verses in question were revealed in reference to the makers of the trench, He *the Almighty* told us that they did not repent to Him. In other words, they died in a state of disbelief. It is as if the verses were alluding to the disbelieving people who lived at the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. So, the principle mentioned in His saying: 'For those who persecute believing men and women, and do not repent afterwards, there will be the torment of hell and burning...' (*al-Buruj*: 10) is a general issue of faith which is applicable to every time and place.

Afterwards, Allah mentions the opposite recompense, saying:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرَى  
 مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْكَبِيرُ ﴿١١﴾

**But for those who believe and do good deeds there will be  
 Gardens graced with flowing streams: that is the great  
 triumph [11] (The Quran, *al-Buruj*: 11)**

Allah *Glorified is He* describes the believers' reward as a 'great triumph.' This is because when there is a conflict between truth and falsehood or between two falsehoods, we have two results: the first is when the two powers are equal and no one of them achieves victory in the conflict – there is neither a victorious nor a defeated party. The second case is when one of the two powers achieves victory, so we have a victorious party and a defeated one.

The easiest result of a battle is when it is fluctuating, that is, there is no winner or loser. This is due to the fact that when a party is defeated, it loses the goodness of victory and suffers the humiliation of defeat.

Those who believe and do good deeds will achieve a great triumph. First, they will be removed away from the Fire and be saved from its torment. Were this salvation be their only reward, it would be enough. So, how great their triumph will be if they are admitted to paradise after being removed away from the Fire! Afterwards, they take their positions in paradise in proportion to the severity of the persecution they suffered on account of their religion. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: '...that is the great triumph.' (*al-Buruj*: 11) So, we have a 'great triumph' and the 'greater triumph,' as He *Glorified is He* says elsewhere: '...and best of all is Allah's goodly pleasure; that is the grand achievement.' (*at-Tawba*: 72)

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

إِنَّ بَطْشَ رَبِّكَ لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿١٢﴾ إِنَّهُ هُوَ يُبْدِي وَيُعِيدُ ﴿١٣﴾ وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الْودُودُ ﴿١٤﴾  
ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ ﴿١٥﴾ فَعَالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ ﴿١٦﴾

**[Prophet], your Lord's punishment is truly stern [12]  
it is He who brings people to life, and will restore them  
to life again [13] and He is the Most Forgiving, the Most  
Loving [14] The Glorious Lord of the Throne [15] He does  
whatever He will [16] (The Quran, *al-Buruj*: 12-16)**

These verses tell us about a general, lasting fact, that is, Allah *the Almighty* sternly punishes the disbelievers in all times and places. The story of the Makers of the Trench is a case in point. It is clear here that the address is directed to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Consequently, the stern punishment, referred to in this verse in question, serves as a threat for the disobedient disbelievers who lived at the time of his *peace and blessings be upon him Da'wah*. Here, the Arabic word *Batsh* means to seize violently and sternly. The pronoun in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...your Lord...' (*al-Buruj*: 12) refers to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It is thus clear that the threat is directed to those who oppose his Call and persecute the believers by torturing them and mocking them.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* reminds us about the grounds for afflicting His stern punishment on those disbelievers, saying: '...it is He who brings people to life, and will restore them to life again.' (*al-Buruj*: 13) The two edges of existence, which are bringing to life and resurrection, are fully controlled by Allah *the Almighty* Alone, without any partner. His punishment is stern because He *Glorified is He* possesses the absolute Power that no other power equates or overcomes. Thus, no one can prevent His stern punishment or even support someone else against it, for He *the Almighty* seizes sternly. Moreover, He *Glorified is He* protects while none can protect against Him.

The verse in question, according to Muslim scholars, refers to the topic of bringing to life and Resurrection. Another possible interpretation is that Allah *the Almighty* repeats the punishment that He *Glorified is He* inflicted on a certain previous nation by way of punishing another one. That is to say that as long as His *Glorified is He* punishment for the disbelieving previous nations was

stern, then His for the disbelievers who witnessed the Call of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, would also be stern.

A third possible interpretation is that Allah *the Almighty* causes the whole universe to experience progressive and regressive circulations. This is observed in the circulation of all the beings in the universe, as in the case of water. The amount of water that He *the Almighty* created in the world is the same; it neither increases nor decreases. However, it experiences a circulation where it decreases in some areas and increases in others.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...and He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Loving...’ (*al-Buruj*: 14), it means that He *the Almighty* is the Most Forgiving for the sinners and the Most Loving for the obedient servants. Both these Divine Attributes make man strongly believe in that God and greatly love that belief.

The Attribute ‘Most Forgiving,’ unlike ‘Forgiving,’ expresses hyperbole and intensiveness; however, we should correctly understand the meaning of hyperbole with regard to the Attributes of Allah *the Almighty*. This is because hyperbole is mainly related to the created beings whose attributes fluctuate between strength and weakness. In other words, due to the undeniable fact that the human being’s attributes are fluctuating, hyperbole is thus utilized in order to express their strength. On the contrary, Allah’s Attributes are unchangeable. So, when we say that the Attribute ‘Most Forgiving’ expresses hyperbole, this does not mean that His *Glorified is He* Attributes are fluctuating, for all of them are always perfect. Rather, the difference between the Forgiving and the Most Forgiving is only that the effect of the latter is greater on those who are the recipient of the bestowals of that Attribute.

In the same connection, some people argue over the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...and your Lord is not in the least unjust to the servants.’ (*Fussilat*: 46) It is well-known that the intensified attribute affirms the basic meaning of that attribute. For example, if we say, ‘So and so is an authority,’ this means that s/he is basically knowledgeable. By contrast, when we negate the intensified attribute, its basic meaning is not necessarily negated. For instance, if we say, ‘So and so is not an authority,’ this does not necessarily mean that s/he is not knowledgeable.



With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...and your Lord is not in the least unjust to the servants...’ (*Fussilat*: 46) if we negate the intensified attribute of injustice, does this mean that He *Glorified is He* is unjust – Allah forbid?! In order to clarify this point, we should state that this is a wrong understanding that stems from attributing the intensiveness to Allah’s Attribute of not being unjust. In reality, however, the object of intensification is related to the recipient of this Attribute. What does this mean? If we reflect on the verse: ‘...and your Lord is not in the least unjust to the servants...’ (*Fussilat*: 46) we find that He *the Almighty* does not say that He is not the least unjust to the ‘servant’, but rather to the ‘servants’, in the plural form. If He *the Almighty* had said that He is not unjust to the servant, then the attribute of injustice could have been attributed to Him. However, the verse is talking about all the servants. The aspect of the intensiveness in any attribute is either related to its strength or the multiplicity of its occurrences to the recipient.

Let us give an example to further illustrate this fact; if we say that so and so is gluttonous -which is the intensified attribute of ‘eater’ - then this action of eating could be intensive in itself, that is, s/he eats the meals suitable to ten people; or s/he eats moderately, but many times every day. In this sense, we can understand that if the act of injustice takes place, it will be in proportion to the strength of the unjust person, as the weak one never acts unjustly. So, were He *Glorified is He* to act unjustly, His injustice would be strong and powerful. In the same sense, we should understand His intensified Attributes of Gratefulness, accepting the repentance and patience; they are intensified with regard to the creatures who receive the bestowals of these Attributes. As for the Attributes themselves, they are absolutely perfect and unchangeable.

The root of the Arabic word *Ghafr* (Forgiving) means to conceal; one of its derivatives, *Maghfir*, refers to the clothes that the knight wears to protect himself from the strikes of his enemy. Consequently, Allah *the Almighty* forgives the sin and conceals it so that the one who commits it averts being exposed before the people. That is why the Islamic Law prohibits us from seeking to expose other people’s faults. As for the Attribute ‘Most Forgiving,’ it is related to the Recompense in the Hereafter. It entails pardoning those who repented of their sins, as well as those who committed sins but did not

repent. If they are monotheists and meet with Allah *the Almighty* without believing in any partner with Him, then they will receive an intensive Forgiveness. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'Say: O my servants! Who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives the faults altogether...' (*az-Zumar*: 53).

Those who commit the major sin of polytheism are excluded from receiving Allah's Forgiveness. That is why when Ibn 'Abbas recited this verse, he said, 'Polytheism is an exception here.' Why? This, in actuality, prevents its contradiction to Allah's saying: 'Surely, Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases...' (*an-Nisa*: 48). This prevents the contradiction of the Quranic texts. In fact, we can understand that polytheism is excluded even without referring to the other verse, for His saying: 'Say: O my servants! Who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives the faults altogether...' (*az-Zumar*: 53) carries the meaning of excluding polytheism, as the words 'My servants' connote sincerity and worshipping Him *the Almighty* Alone. To those who acted extravagantly against their own souls, it is said: '...do not despair of the Mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives the faults altogether...' (*az-Zumar*: 53). The disbeliever or the polytheist is not called 'a sinner,' for s/he is outside the fold of Islam. The sinner, on the other hand, believes in the Islamic precepts and principles, but violates some of them, whereas the disbeliever and the polytheist do not believe in them at all.

As for the Divine Attribute 'Most Loving', it denotes intensive kindness and affection with the beloved one. The morphological scale '*Fa'ul*' can be used as an object like *Rasul* (messenger), which means 'someone sent.' Further, it can be used as a subject like *Wadud* (loving), which means to show affection towards the beloved one. This word can also be an object, that is, the love is shown to Allah *the Almighty* by His servant who loves Him. So, the affection is reciprocal between Him *Glorified is He* and His servant. Out of His Benevolence and Generosity, He *the Almighty* shows love towards His servant. Another servant may seek love with Him *Glorified is He* until He *the Almighty* shows love towards him/her. Such a servant pursues that objective and spares no effort to

reach it. Here, we should differentiate between two cases: a man who keeps knocking on the door until it is opened to him/her, and the one who is actually invited by the owner of the house to get in.

So, there are two cases for having love and affection with Allah *the Almighty* and receiving His Benevolence. The first case is a manifestation of His Benevolence, which makes the servant attain to obedience to Him *Glorified is He*. The second case is when the servant exerts his/her utmost effort and attains to His Benevolence through his/her obedience to Him *Glorified is He*. One can take either way to attain to Allah's Pleasure - this is what we should care about. Out of His Lovingness, He *the Almighty* instills the love of the ones whom He loves into the hearts of the creatures, a fact which is affirmed by the following Prophetic Hadith in which Prophet Muhammad states: 'When Allah loves a slave, He calls out Gabriel and says: "I love so-and-so; so love him." Then Gabriel loves him. After that he (Gabriel) announces to the inhabitants of the heavens that Allah loves so-and-so; so love him; and the inhabitants of the heavens (the angels) also love him and then make people on earth love him.'<sup>(1)</sup>

Then Allah *the Almighty* mentions some of His Attributes that proves His stern punishment, saying: 'The Glorious Lord of the Throne.' (*al-Buruj*: 15) The words 'the Throne, the Chair, the Balance and the Preserved Tablet' are unseen objects. They were reported to us through a truthful conveyer and that is why we firmly believe in them. We do not believe in them just because we heard about them, but rather because they were conveyed to us through a truthful person who conveyed them from Allah *the Almighty*. After believing in these unseen objects, the mind should not delve into thinking about their reality because they are beyond the human intellectual abilities and perceptions. For example, when He *Glorified is He* tells us that He has a Throne, we must believe in its existence without thinking about its reality or quality. As He *the Almighty* did not reveal that knowledge to us, we should say, 'Allah knows best.' When we say that the Queen of Sheba had a throne, can we negate the fact of its existence just because we did not see it? Thus, perceiving an object is not a condition to believe in its existence.

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 7625; and Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 8392.*

The matter is all about our trust in the truthfulness of the conveyer. So, if the unseen object is comparable to something tangible we have in the worldly life, we should perceive the unseen one in the light of our knowledge of the tangible one. Further, when the like of Allah's Attributes are found in the created beings, we must attribute them to Him *Glorified is He* in the sense that befits Him and attribute them to the created beings in the sense that befits them – in the light of His saying: 'Nothing is like Him...' (*ash-Shura*: 11).

If we are still unable, despite scientific advancements, to know the reality of some tangible objects in our lives, like electricity, how can we hope to know the reality of unseen matters related to Allah *the Almighty*? If one's mind is unable to realize the essence of these objects, then this inability itself serves as the best answer for one's inquiry in this regard, as these matters are beyond perception and mental realization. We have previously said that 'the inability to realize something is a matter of realization in itself'. For example, if a father gives his child a test beyond his/her level, like that given in the faculty of engineering, the child will realize that s/he cannot answer the test because it depends on knowing information unavailable to him/her in the secondary school. So, s/he is truthful when s/he says, 'I cannot answer it.' Another pupil may try hard to answer that test, which is beyond his/her level, and stay up to suppose some answers. However, s/he ultimately does not achieve his/her objective. This indicates that the first pupil is smarter than the second and that the inability to realize something is a matter of realization in itself.

As for Allah's saying: '...the Glorious...' (*al-Buruj*: 15), it is one of His Names and Attributes, which means the Ample-Giving whose Bestowal is bountiful enough to meet all the requirements of existence. This Attribute calls for magnifying and exalting Him *the Almighty*.

He *the Almighty* then says: 'He does whatever He will.' (*al-Buruj*: 16) If He *the Almighty* is fully Able to do whatever He wants, why does He allow the disbelievers to persecute those who believe in Him and His Messengers?! How would this happen while it is against His Will? In fact, He *the Almighty* wants to guide all the people, but the nature of the conflict between the Messengers and their people entails the existence of believers and disbelievers. The human being has an aspect of evil, especially when s/he does not abide

by Allah's Way of Guidance. When we review the stories of the Messengers, we find that Prophet Solomon *peace be upon him* was a powerful king, along with being a Prophet. Did we know about any conflict between him and his people? No; he had no opponents because he possessed the kingship and the power that could deter any opponent. Consequently, no one dared to rebel against him, even Balqis, the Queen of Sheba – who also possessed kingship and power – came to him obediently, believing in Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

By contrast, if the Messenger is not supported by the power of kingship, his Call necessarily experiences some ups and downs with respect to his conflict with his opponents. Despite that, the Divine Law states that the ultimate outcome is the victory and the triumph of the Call of Allah. The basics of the Call prescribe that we should clarify to those who want to embrace the religion of Islam that the outcome of this action is not always loveable with respect to the harm that s/he may suffer, including humiliation, beating and being forced into exile. So, s/he should bear the responsibility of that action, for the religion is not always victorious with mundane gains and booties. Rather, its real reward is in the Hereafter. All of this prepares and qualifies the person before embracing Islam.

For this reason, Islam in the Meccan period paid the believers' attention to the reward of the Hereafter. For example, when *Al-Ansar* asked Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, 'What is our reward if we fulfil our covenant?' He said, 'Your reward will be the paradise.' He did not tell them that they would defeat their enemy and conquest their territories. This is because the Meccan period was mainly one of preparation and education to compare between the worldly pleasure and that of the Hereafter. This does not mean that the believers will remain in a state of oppression and will get their reward only in the Hereafter; rather, they have a share in the pleasure of worldly life. We should note that Allah *the Almighty* does not grant victory to the believers for the effort they exert, but rather because they have a Message to deliver to the people.

Even when the tyrannical, persecuting and disbelieving group defeats the weak, persecuted and believing one, there exists an important victory for the believing group, namely: its victory over the persecution itself. Some of the

oppressed Muslims' salvation from persecution was conditional on uttering a word of disbelief, but they did not utter it. This is in itself a victory far more important than that of the oppressive, tyrannical power of disbelief. Moreover, the oppressed believers' victory over the persecution produces powerful followers that would take up the banner of the Call and strive for its sake. It is an adequate honour for the oppressed people that they were killed on account of upholding a principle, which would be established in the souls of their successors.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ الْجُنُودِ ﴿١٧﴾ فِرْعَوْنَ وَثَمُودَ ﴿١٨﴾ بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي تَكْذِيبٍ ﴿١٩﴾  
وَاللَّهُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ مُحِيطٌ ﴿٢٠﴾ بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَجِيدٌ ﴿٢١﴾ فِي لَوْحٍ مَحْفُوظٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

**Have you [not] heard the stories of the forces [17]  
of Pharaoh and Thamud? [18] Yet still the disbelievers persist  
in denial [19] God surrounds them all [20] This is truly a  
glorious Quran [21] [written] on a preserved Tablet [22]  
(The Quran, *al-Buruj*: 17 - 22)**

The address here is directed to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The word 'stories' indicates that this account was common to the people and known through the books of history that recorded it. In other words, it is not a new report or a novel account coming from Allah *the Almighty*. He *the Almighty* clarifies the word 'forces' as referring to the people of Pharaoh and the people of Thamud - the people of Prophet Saleh *peace be upon him*. We notice the accuracy of the Quranic manner of expression in referring to the tribe of Thamud, like Pharaoh, by the singular form. This indicates that the whole tribe collectively agreed on their enmity towards their Messenger and opposing his Call and Message. This unanimity did not exist in the people of Pharaoh. It was Pharaoh who led them to have enmity towards their Messenger, after claiming his divinity as a god besides Allah *the Almighty*. Consequently, they believed and obeyed him. That is why only Pharaoh is mentioned in the verse as he was their leader and took upon himself the greater part of enmity towards the Messenger and the Call.

Here, the Arabic word *Junud* (soldiers) is the plural of a soldier, which refers to the person who prepares himself for fighting and sacrifice. The

interrogation in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Have you [not] heard the stories of the forces?’ (*al-Buruj*: 17) could carry the affirmative meaning, that is, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had already heard about the stories of these forces. Further, it could connote the negation, that is, he *peace and blessings be upon him* had not heard their stories. In this case, it is the first time for him to hear about their stories.

When Allah *the Almighty* addresses Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, saying: ‘Have you [not] heard...’ (*al-Buruj*: 17), then it is He *the Almighty* Who tells him about their stories. We notice that despite the disbelievers’ keenness on denying Messenger Muhammad’s Call, they did not question these stories or the fate of the denying nations before them. They accepted what was mentioned in the Quran without denial, despite their eagerness to oppose the Call in every possible way. This clearly indicates that they received part of these stories from the People of the Book or the storytellers during their journeys in which they passed by the cities of Saleh and their remnants. So, these stories were known to them.

Allah *the Almighty* gives an example for the disbelievers of Mecca by two previous denying nations that had great history and civilizations. He *the Almighty* says in the chapter of *al-Fajr*: ‘... and the Thamud, who hewed into the rocks in the valley, and the mighty and powerful Pharaoh? All of them committed excesses in their lands, and spread corruption there: Your Lord let a scourge of punishment loose on them. Your Lord is always watchful.’ (*al-Fajr*: 9-14) So, He *the Almighty* is always Watchful over all the disbelieving nations like that of Thamud and Pharaoh. The disbelieving people of Quraysh, who denied Messenger Muhammad’s Call, are weak in comparison with these previous nations. Despite their civilization and advancement, He *Glorified is He* seized them with punishment; therefore, can He not seize the disbelievers of Quraysh in the same way, given that they are weaker than these nations?!

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Yet still the disbelievers persist in denial...’ (*al-Buruj*: 19) it means that the disbelievers from among Prophet Muhammad’s people are like the deniers before them. Such people deny the Calls of the Messengers at all times and places. They have one objective: to find an argument or excuse to justify their opposing attitude against the call, for if they believed in it, they would have to comply with its commands.

With regard to His saying: 'Allah surrounds them all...' (*al-Buruj*: 20) those disbelievers turned their back to Allah *the Almighty* while He *Glorified is He* surrounds them all. They wrongly thought they had escaped from Him, but He *the Almighty* says: '...and We are not to be overcome.' (*al-Ma'arij*: 14)

Afterwards, He *the Almighty* says: 'This is truly a glorious Quran [written] on a preserved Tablet.' (*al-Buruj*: 21-22) These verses indicate that the disbelievers denied the content of the Quran and the fact that it was revealed from Allah *the Almighty*. So, He *the Almighty* affirms that the Quran is truthful in what it conveys and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is truthful in conveying the Message on behalf of Allah *Glorified is He*. Further, the Quran is distinguished from the other Books by the fact that it is perfectly preserved: 'Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian.' (*al-Hijr*: 9)

If we carefully reflect on His saying: 'This is truly a glorious Quran [written] on a preserved Tablet...' (*al-Buruj*: 21-22) we find that the adjective 'preserved' is describing the Tablet and not the Quran. So if the Tablet that contains the Quran is preserved, so what would we think about the preservation of the Quran itself? This actually reassures Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the future of his Call and the future of the eternal Book that he came with. It is as if He *the Almighty* says to him, 'O Muhammad, do not feel sad and be patient about the denial of your people, for the Book with which you were sent is eternal and preserved from any distortion, whether in the high Assembly or on the earth.'



the chapter of

***at-Tariq***



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

**T**he chapter of *at-Tariq*<sup>(1)</sup>



**By the sky and the night-comer [1] What will explain to you  
what the night-comer is? [2] The piercing star [3] there is a  
watcher over every soul [4] (The Quran, *at-Tariq*: 1- 4)**

Many previous chapters directed man's attention to the manifestations of Allah's Power in the universe, to the well-established universal signs and to the mighty alteration and destruction that would befall these signs, as well as the whole universe. These universal signs are clearly mentioned in some chapters like *ash-Shams*, *al-Infitar*, *al-Buruj* and the chapter in question, *at-Tariq*. As Allah *the Almighty* swears in the chapter of *al-Buruj*, saying: 'By the sky and with towering constellations.' (*al-Buruj*: 1) He *Glorified is He* swears here, saying: 'By the sky and the night-comer.' (*at-Tariq*: 1)

We have said that the word *Sama'* (sky) generally refers to what is over and shadowing you. As for the constructed sky, it is the one that Allah *the Almighty* created without supports to be the canopy of the whole earth. When the

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(1) The chapter of *At-Tariq*, counting 17 verses, is number 87 in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *Al-Balad* and before the chapter of *Al-Qamar*. Some scholars say that the verse: '[Prophet], let the disbelievers be, let them be for a while...' (*at-Tariq*: 17) is abrogated by the verse of the sword, but this is an unsound opinion, for every verse has its own field and time of application.

scholars talk about the sky, they only consider its highness. Whenever the human mind discovers a new celestial body, it assumes it is the sky. For example, in this age, when the planets going around the sun were discovered, some scholars said, 'The seven heavens are the seven planets moving around the sun.' At that time, only seven planets were discovered. Afterwards, however, these scholars' opinion was refuted when many other planets were discovered. Now, ten planets have been discovered. In reality, all the planets, stars, and orbits are under the lower heaven; that is to say that it, i.e. the sky, is far above these bodies. It is as if those who adopted the previous theory did not reflect on the saying of Allah *the Almighty* about the stars: 'Surely, We have adorned the nearest heaven with an adornment, the stars.' (*as-Saffat*: 6) As for the lower heaven, it is preserved and well-established above the stars. He *the Almighty* constructed it perfectly and precisely. We do not know the reality of that construction, and if He *Glorified is He* had willed to reveal that knowledge, He would have told us about it. However, He *the Almighty* kept this matter unseen, beyond our perceptions and experimental sciences. It suffices that we recall the connotations of the word 'heaven' when we hear it.

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'By the sky and the night-comer...' (*at-Tariq*: 1) it gives us a picture of a phenomenon we have not really known about its reality. He *the Almighty* defines it to us by its traces and function in the existence. So, it is adequate for the servant who is charged with religious obligations to reflect on the effects of these phenomena, even if s/he does not know their realities. We have said before that making use of something is not conditional on knowing its reality or formation. For example, we make use of the sun without knowing its reality. Likewise, He *the Almighty* pays our attention to the fact that the 'night-comer' is a beneficial universal sign.

Afterwards, He *the Almighty* clarifies the meaning of the 'night-comer,' saying: 'What will explain to you what the night-comer is? The piercing star.' (*at-Tariq*: 2-3) If He *Glorified is He* had not clarified it to us, we would not have known anything about it because the human mind only recognises its effects. The night-comer (*Tariq*) is the piercing star. The Arabic word '*Tariq*' is an active participle meaning to strike powerfully to produce a sound. One of its derivatives is *Al-Mutraqa* (hammer) that the blacksmith uses. Another

derivative is *At-Tareeq*, which is the paved way that we take and walk on by our feet. Linguistically, this word used to refer to the one who takes a way, but it then especially referred to the one who walks at night. As night is the time of tranquillity when the activities decrease and the noise abates, then any movement in that tranquillity is called *Tariq*. When the night-comer finds the doors usually closed, s/he knocks on it to seek permission to get in. In the daytime, however, there is no need for knocking, for the doors are usually open.

Afterwards, the meaning of this word extended to include all that happens to the human being, be it tangible or intangible, like delusion and imagination. That is why it is said, 'We seek refuge in Allah from the coming (*Tariq*) of the concerns.' These are the evil thoughts that change man's good mood, as it is difficult for him/her to eliminate them. Were they tangible, s/he could eliminate them. The spiritual concern, on the contrary, penetrates into the person unconsciously, so it is the worst kind of feelings that overwhelm the person. This is because s/he cannot protect him/herself from it by closing the door or pushing it away, for example.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'The piercing star...' (*at-Tariq*: 3) it means that this star pierces darkness with its light. This is one of Allah's signs because He wants to show us how He, the Creator, cares about the created beings. He *the Almighty* made the sun shining at the daytime and the moon lighting up at night. Further, He *Glorified is He* made the stars signs to guide those who are forced to walk or work at night, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'And landmarks; and by the stars they find the right way.' (*an-Nahl*: 16) So, the night-comer is the star that pierces the darkness of the night with light. Light is something visible, so why does the Quran call it '*Tariq*' which is something audible? We say that the word *Tariq* is general, referring to what is coming even if it is a mental delusion, imagination or something unheard.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'The piercing star...' (*at-Tariq*: 3) indicates that if the light of that star did not come, the darkness of the night would be incomprehensible, which makes moving at night impossible. This shows the importance of that piercing star and Allah's Care for us during the night and the day.

Afterwards, the subject of the Oath is mentioned: '...there is a watcher over every soul.' (*at-Tariq*: 4) So, what is the relation between the piercing star, by which it is sworn, and the subject of that Oath? We say that the Arabic word *Hafizh* (keeper or watcher) here either connotes the keepers' love and care for the protected ones; or it means the watcher that always keeps an eye on the person. If we consider the first meaning, we find that Allah's saying: 'For his sake there are angels following one another, before him and behind him, who guard him by Allah's Commandment...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 11) means that guarding the human being is a command issued by Allah *the Almighty*. This is due to the fact that s/he experiences many calamities that his/her power cannot prevent and his/her acumen cannot avert. When s/he is saved from such calamities, s/he says that this was a Divine predestination and s/he was saved only by Allah's Will. So, there are Angels in charge of protecting man from the events that are beyond his/her capacity.

If we yet consider the second meaning, which is watchfulness, then it is corroborated with His saying: 'Over you stand watchers, noble recorders.' (*al-Infitar*: 10-11) Thus, His saying: '...there is a watcher over every soul...' (*at-Tariq*: 4) clearly shows man his/her rights and duties. Accordingly, His *Glorified is He* saying: 'Over you stand watchers...' (*al-Infitar*: 10) if the first meaning is considered, signifies that there are keepers for the human beings and recording watchers over them.

Further, in His saying: '...there is a watcher over every soul...' (*at-Tariq*: 4) the Arabic particle *In* is synonymous with the negative particle *Ma*, as in His saying: '...their mothers are no (*In*) others than those who gave them birth...' (*al-Mujadala*: 2). As for the particle *Lamma*, it has many usages in the Arabic language. For example, it negates the verb in the past tense, like *Lam*. However, its negation extends to the present and thus carries the possibility and the expectation of the occurrence of the negated action in the future, as in His saying: 'The dwellers of the desert say: We believe. Say: You do not believe but say, We submit; and faith has not yet (*Lamma*) entered into your hearts...' (*al-Hujurat*: 14). This clearly means that Faith has not yet entered into their hearts at the time of revealing this verse, but it is expected that it will enter into them in the future. For example, one may say, 'Our garden has not

yielded fruits yet, though all the rest of the gardens have already yielded fruits.’ So, this particle changes the meaning of a verb from the present tense to the past.

There is another usage for the particle *Lamma*, which is to denote that the existence of something is conditional on the existence of another, a meaning which is deduced from His saying: ‘So when fear had gone away from Ibrahim and good news came to him, he began to plead with Us for Lot’s people.’ (*Hud*: 74) Likewise, we say, ‘When so and so came, we made such and such.’ Here, the action of ‘making’ is conditional on that of ‘coming’. The third usage of the particle *Lamma* is to be used as a particle of exception, which is the usage employed in the verse in question. So, the meaning of the verse is that there is no soul except that there is a watcher over it; no one is excluded from having that watcher.

We should reflect on the accurate manner of expression that generalises the watchfulness over all the souls. Despite the fact that the word ‘soul’ here indicates the generality by itself, it, i.e. the generality was further emphasised by the word ‘all’, which denotes comprehensiveness. So, no soul is free from being watched by Allah *the Almighty* as all the creatures are under His Observation; and also by the Angels whom He *Glorified is He* charged with recording the deeds of the people and watching them.

Here, there is harmony between Allah’s words: ‘The piercing star...’ (*at-Tariq*: 2-3) and His saying: ‘...there is a watcher over every soul.’ (*at-Tariq*: 4) It is as if the watcher sees everything of man’s actions and is ever-watchful over him/her like the piercing star which pierces the darkness, penetrates into the subtle objects and reveals its hidden matters. So, there is an obvious aspect of harmony between the verses as He *the Almighty* then says: ‘On the Day when secrets are laid bare.’ (*at-Tariq*: 9) This means that the hidden matters will be revealed on the Day of Judgment.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* directs our attention from a universal sign, which is: ‘By the sky and the night-comer...’ (*at-Tariq*: 1) to a psychological sign in His saying: ‘...there is a watcher over every soul.’ (*at-Tariq*: 4) He *the Almighty* subjected this universal sign to serve the interest of the human being. In return for this bestowal, s/he should bear the responsibility for something, which is

being watched over and held accountable. This is because He *the Almighty* did not create man in vain and does not leave him/her to wander purposelessly. In fact, s/he has a mission and an objective in his/her life, namely: to pursue the way of getting close to Him *Glorified is He*.

For this reason, the subsequent verses direct him/her to the universal signs related to his/her creation. Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ ﴿٥﴾ خُلِقَ مِنْ مَّاءٍ دَافِقٍ ﴿٦﴾ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَيْنِ الصُّلْبِ وَالتَّرَائِبِ ﴿٧﴾  
إِنَّهُ عَلَى رَجْعِهِ لَقَادِرٌ ﴿٨﴾ يَوْمَ تُبْلَى السَّرَائِرُ ﴿٩﴾ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَلَا نَاصِرٍ ﴿١٠﴾

**Man should reflect on what he was created from [5] He is created from spurting fluid [6] then he emerges from between the backbone and breastbone [7] God is certainly able to bring him back to life [8] On the Day when secrets are laid bare [9] he will have no power and no one to help him [10] (The Quran, *at-Tariq*: 5 - 10)**

We can notice harmony between these verses and those in the very beginning of the chapter in question. That is to say that His *Glorified is He* saying: ‘By the sky and the night-comer—What will explain to you what the night-comer is?’ (*at-Tariq*: 1-2) is in harmony with His saying: ‘Man should reflect on what he was created from. He is created from spurting fluid.’ (*at-Tariq*: 5-6) Further, His saying: ‘...there is a watcher over every soul...’ (*at-Tariq*: 4) is in harmony with His saying: ‘Allah is certainly able to bring him back to life. On the Day when secrets are laid bare he will have no power and no one to help him.’ (*at-Tariq*: 5-10)

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Man should reflect on what he was created from...’ (*at-Tariq*: 5) we know that the creation of man is a factual reality that no one doubts. S/he is required to reflect on his/her creation and ponder on his/her image, constitution and perfection of his/her creation, given that s/he is a master in this universe and is distinguished from all the other genera in the existence. All these genera serve him/her, as Allah *the Almighty* has granted him/her a successive privilege. We have explained before that the plants are superior to the inanimate objects, but inferior to the



animals. Man in his/her turn is superior to the animal, as s/he is distinguished by the mind and the thought. So, s/he has the loftiest rank in existence and is a master in the universe.

For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* calls man to reflect on the matter of his/her creation through the mind and thought that He *Glorified is He* gifted to him/her. In fact, reflecting on the Quran does not mean to look at it, but rather to think about it and ponder on its premises that lead to the truth. We know for sure that the scientific experiment starts with observation, and then the experiment is conducted according to the observation in order to reach the scientific fact. Thus, deep reflection, not the superficial one, is essential for reaching the truth.

After calling upon man to reflect on his/her creation, Allah *the Almighty* tells us about how He created us, saying: 'He is created from spurting fluid, then he emerges from between the backbone and breastbone.' (*at-Tariq*: 6-7) These verses bear a fact that modern science has proven, that is, man's creation comes from spurting fluid that emerges from between man's backbone and woman's breastbone. The fluid is described as 'spurting,' which means that it is naturally and unwillingly discharged. No one can prevent it because it is spurting by nature. If man reached the highest sexual state, that fluid spurts and cannot be prevented. This is the only state when that fluid is described as 'spurting,' otherwise it is calm.

The address in these verses is directed to mankind who was created from spurting fluid. So, what about Adam *peace be upon him* who was created from dust? Scholars say that Allah *the Almighty* wants to direct man's attention to the origin of his/her existence because s/he was ignorant about it. As for Adam, he witnessed how he was formed by Allah's Hand and saw the breathing of the Spirit into him, i.e. he had an idea about his creation. By contrast, his offspring does not know anything about the nature of their creation.

Creation means to bring something into existence out of nothing. It can be absolutely non-existent or existent in a form that does not seem to be the ultimate perfect form of the man. For example, if we consider the material from which man is created, we find that man's sperm mixes with the ovum, producing a cell that splits wonderfully, even though it has no mind or will.

This information is provided by embryologists. Allah *the Almighty* accurately directs this cell to its right way. One of its parts forms the bones; another forms the muscles, the organs, etc. This cell can never do that except if there is a Powerful, Wise Creator Who organises everything and guides every cell to its function in forming the human being, the marvellous creation. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: ‘...He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (to its goal).’ (*Ta Ha*: 50)

Allah *the Almighty* tells us about the matter of creation in order to refute the idea that man’s creation always depends on casual factors, that is, the spurting fluid that emerges from between the backbone and the breastbone. Undoubtedly, this is the common way of man’s creation. However, He *the Almighty* is fully Able to create without any causal factors, spurting fluid, backbone or breastbone, given that He *Glorified is He* created Adam, our original father, out of nothing. In addition, He *Glorified is He* created by all the possible ways of creation. Adam was created without a father and a mother while the overwhelming majority of the people were created with a father and a mother. Further, Prophet Jesus *peace be upon him* was created by a mother without a father, and Eve was created by a father without a mother. Moreover, there could be a father and a mother, but they do not bring children to birth. So, this matter does not depend on the causal factors, but rather on the Power of the Ultimate Cause Who says: ‘Allah’s is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; He creates what He pleases; He grants to whom He pleases daughters and grants to whom He pleases sons. Or He makes them of both sorts, male and female; and He makes whom He pleases barren.’ (*ash-Shura*: 49-50) He *the Almighty* mentions the barrenness even with the existence of the causal factors of bringing children to birth.

Elsewhere, He *the Almighty* describes the spurting fluid, saying: ‘...underrated water.’ (*al-Mursalat*: 20) It is a valueless, underrated fluid that cannot form anything by itself. It is Allah’s Omnipotence that gives it that vitality and the miraculous, wonderful movement. If we refer to the lower genus, we find that the process of man’s creation is similar to that of the animal; it is created from spurting fluid that emerges from between the backbone and the breastbone to produce an insensible animal. To reiterate, the matter of creation does not depend on the spurting fluid that emerges from between the backbone and the

breastbone; rather, is it all about the Will and the Power of the Creator and the Originator of the universe.

The man who was formed in a beautiful image and given many faculties should have asked about his/her origin and whether this origin negates his/her human privileges. S/he should know that a Powerful Creator and Originator is the reason behind the creation of the honoured man from an underrated fluid; otherwise, the animal is produced in the same way, yet it remains an animal. That is why we do not say that the animal has a Spirit, but rather grows bigger. For this reason, scholars opine that the fetus in its mother's womb is not considered a human being except after the passage of 120 days. Before that time, it is viewed as animally growing. In this connection, it is narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says: 'The creation of you (humans) is gathered in the form of semen in the womb of your mother for 40 days, then it becomes a clinging thing in similar (period), then it becomes a lump of flesh like that, then Allah sends an angel who breathes the life into it.'<sup>(1)</sup>

Does this growth not mean that the foetus has a Spirit before 120 days? Scholars hold the position that this is called 'the animal growth' and not the human Spirit that is breathed into the foetus after 120 days. As for the animal growth, it is similar to the plant growth when one seeds the earth with grains and irrigates it to produce, by Allah's Grace. Likewise, the sperm has the potentiality of the animal outgrowth and when it is mixed with the ovum, this animal outgrowth plays its part. Afterwards, the human Spirit is breathed into the foetus. For this reason, scholars permit abortion before the elapse of 120 days of pregnancy, as the human Spirit, before that time, does not really exist. It is true the foetus in this case can grow to be a human being, but it has not reached that time yet.

Some researchers misunderstood the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'He is created from spurting fluid, then he emerges from between the backbone and breastbone.' (*at-Tariq*: 6-7) They wrongly thought that man's sperm, which exists in the semen and is produced by sexual intercourse, is similar to

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Ibn Mas'ud Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 3332 and 6594.*

woman's fluid that also comes out by that process. This is not true because the woman's fluid has nothing to do with the creation of the human being, as s/he is created by man's sperm and woman's ovum. They mix in a time irrelevant to that of the sexual intercourse. The pregnancy takes place when there is an encounter between the sperm and the ovum. Thus, the spurting fluid is related to the man, while woman's fluid is in the ovum.

In this connection, some Orientalist researchers raised some misconceptions about Allah's Words. We should note here that they have evil intentions and plot against Islam. After they authenticate a Hadith, they criticise its textual soundness, making some people wrongly think they are serving Islam and its sacred texts. This is counter to the reality, for they actually care for authenticating the Hadiths to show that there is a contradiction between the Quran and the authentic *Sunna*. However, their endeavour is fruitless and in vain. Their objective is not to authenticate Messenger Muhammad's Hadiths, but to claim the existence of contradictions between the sacred texts.

They discussed the following Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'As for the child, if the man's discharge proceeds the woman's discharge, the child attracts the similarity to the man, and if the woman's discharge proceeds the man's, then the child attracts the similarity to the woman.'<sup>(1)</sup> A superficial view of this Hadith finds it contradictory to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'He is created from spurting fluid, then he emerges from between the backbone and breastbone.' (*at-Tariq*: 6-7) This view concludes that this Hadith contradicts the modern science that has proven that the ovum plays no part in determining masculinity or the femininity of the fetus and that man's fluid controls that matter. Such people understood that fluid carrying the masculine quality as coming from man and the feminine one as coming from the woman. However, the one who ponders carefully on the Hadith finds the key to refuting this misconception in the words, 'If ...proceeds. ...' The act of proceeding indicates that the fluids start racing from the same point and towards one direction. This confirms the fact that the masculine and the feminine sperm come out of the same source, namely: - the

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(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 3938; Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 12970; and 'Abd ibn Humayd, Musnad, Hadith no. 1387.*

man. The word ‘to proceed’ would not have been used if the fluids are coming from two different sources. Thus, it is man’s sperm that carries the masculine or feminine quality. As for the ovum, its role is to receive the sperm. So, we should carefully read the words of the Hadith and pay attention to these misconceptions in order to refute them. Another narration of the Hadith uses the word *Ghalab* instead of *Sabaqa* (to proceed), but these words are synonymous.

Afterwards, the context of the verses tells us about another kind of creation, stating: ‘Allah is certainly able to bring him back to life. On the Day when secrets are laid bare.’ (*at-Tariq*: 8-9) The context here is about Resurrection on the Day of Judgment. As Allah *the Almighty* affirms the greatness of man’s formation, faculties and privileges, despite being created from underrated fluid, which plainly indicates His Care for him/her and entails that s/he should do something in return. We have previously said that there is a duty in return for every right. Allah has given man some blessings and in return he should carry out certain tasks. Further, we have said that the chapter in question gathers the two edges of man’s life before the Hereafter: bringing him/her into existence to the worldly life and resurrecting him/her in the Hereafter. In fact, one’s worldly life is short, as it is presented in his/her fleeting lifetime in it. It is not an end, but rather a means to reach a greater and everlasting end. If the Creator cares for the created beings in the worldly life in the way we have described, so what about His care for them in the Hereafter?

That is why Allah *the Almighty* directs our attention from the first creation to the Resurrection. It is as if man has nothing to do with the stage of the worldly life, or s/he was not created for its sake. S/he should live in it in order to be delighted by his/her Creators’ Care and Love through following his/her Way of Guidance. We have previously explained that the logic and reason, let alone faith and religious law, firmly believe in the existence of another life other than the fleeting, short, worldly life. Otherwise, how would the believer and the disbeliever, the wrongdoer and the wronged one, and the righteous and the corrupt have the same fate? That is why He *the Almighty* says: ‘Does man think that he will be left neglected?’ (*al-Qiyama*: 36) Then He *the Almighty* reminds the man about his/her origin, saying: ‘Had he not been a sperm from semen emitted? Then he was a clinging clot, and [Allah] created [his form]

and proportioned [him] And made of him two mates, the male and the female.' (*al-Qiyama*: 37-39)

Thus, the creation and origination are not meant for the worldly life, but rather for a greater and everlasting objective. In fact, the worldly life is just a bridge for reaching the Hereafter. As there is a watcher over everyone, man should consider the worldly life as a farm whose fruits yield in the Hereafter, which is greater and everlasting. Otherwise, what is the importance of the watcher if the worldly life was created purposelessly and is left neglected? Thus, the existence of the watcher that records the deeds indicates the existence of the Reckoning, as He *the Almighty* says here: 'Allah is certainly able to bring him back to life; on the Day when secrets are laid bare.' (*at-Tariq*: 8-9) So, the One Who will hold us accountable on the Day of Judgment is Omniscient and All-Seeing. He *Glorified is He* neither becomes inattentive nor sleeps. Further, not an atom's weight of our deeds is hidden from Him *Glorified is He*.

As for Allah's saying: 'On the Day when secrets are laid bare,' (*at-Tariq*: 8-9) it means that the hidden matters and secrets of the soul will be exposed. So, if these hidden matters will be revealed, then what about the apparent ones? With regard to His saying: '...he will have no power and no one to help him,' (*at-Tariq*: 10) it means that man will have no power on the Day of Judgment. He *the Almighty* says about having power: 'And prepare against them whatever you are able of power...' (*al-Anfal*: 60). So, on the Day of Resurrection, man will have no power, as s/he will be deprived of wealth, high position, friends, and authority. Further, s/he does not have any helper to support or guard him/her. Thus, s/he loses hope to find a supporter or protector to defend him/her, as He *the Almighty* says: '...then you would not have found any helper against Us.' (*al-Isra'*: 75) S/he will not find anyone to defend or support him/her as it is He *the Almighty* Who gives support to the man. So, how can s/he find a supporter other than Him *the Almighty*?

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الرَّجْعِ ﴿١١﴾ وَالْأَرْضِ ذَاتِ الصَّعِجِ ﴿١٢﴾  
إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلٌ فَصْلٌ ﴿١٣﴾ وَمَا هُوَ بِأَهْزَلُ ﴿١٤﴾

**By the sky and its recurring rain [11] by the earth that  
cracks open! [12] This is truly a decisive statement [13]  
it is not something to be taken lightly [14]  
(The Quran, *at-Tariq*: 11-14)**

After talking about bringing man back to life, saying: ‘Allah is certainly able to bring him back to life.’ (*at-Tariq*: 8) He *the Almighty* supports this fact by making mention of the perceived universal signs in the heavens and the earth. This is because the disbelievers of Mecca who lived at the time of the revelation questioned the matter of Resurrection and bringing the people back to life after death. Consequently, He *the Almighty* says: ‘By the sky and its recurring rain, by the earth that cracks open!’ (*at-Tariq*: 11-12) These verses use the surrounding phenomena to prove that the matter of Resurrection after death is possible and even easy. Resurrecting people on the Day of Judgment is comparable to the circulation of the water in the universe.

So, His saying: ‘By the sky and its recurring rain,’ (*at-Tariq*: 11) refers, according to scholars, to the recurrence of the rain. It is one of the manifestations of the circulation of water in the universe. The evaporation of seawater forms the clouds in the sky and then the rain falls. That is why the rain is called *Raj’* (recurring), as it returns once again. We only benefit from water when it falls down from the sky to the earth. In this case, it will be sweet water, which is suitable for drinking and irrigating the crops. The one who can cause the rain to recur is fully Able to resurrect the human being, as He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Allah is certainly able to bring him back to life.’ (*at-Tariq*: 8) For that reason, we read in the chapter of *adh-Dhariyat*: ‘I swear by the wind that scatters far and wide, Then those clouds bearing the load (of minute things in space). Then those (ships) that glide easily, Then those (angels who) distribute blessings by Our Command; What you are threatened with is most surely true, And the judgment must most surely come about.’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 1-6)

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* uses the entire circulation of the water in the universe as a proof for the facts mentioned in His saying: ‘What you are

threatened with is most surely true, And the judgment must most surely come about.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 5-6) These verses affirm that the Day of Judgment is true, and it will for sure come to pass. Someone may ask, 'Why is water circulation especially mentioned? Scholars say that this is because all its stages are perceived by all the people. Even the cup of water that a person drinks could have been drunk millions of times. This is due to the fact that the water that Allah *Glorified is He* created in the universe neither increases nor decreases. It just circulates in the way we know.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...by the earth that cracks open!' (*at-Tariq*: 12) it means that the earth splits open so that the plants come out of it. So it is as if His saying: 'By the sky and its recurring rain, by the earth that cracks open!' (*at-Tariq*: 11-12) is another form of creation. This is because the rain is similar to the spurting fluid, and the earth that cracks open is like the womb that receives that fluid. Thus, the entire life is a set of harmonious laws that are controlled by one law applicable to all the created beings, be they heavenly or earthly.

After the creation comes the role of Allah's Ever-Watchfulness and sustaining Power that provide the created beings with continuous Care and Protection.

The mission does end at the stage of creation, as Allah *the Almighty* continues to provide sustenance for the created beings. The One Who gives life sustains it as well. He *Glorified is He* gives life through the spurting fluid that emerges from between the backbone and the breastbone. Further, He *the Almighty* sustains life through the means mentioned in His saying: 'By the sky and its recurring rain, by the earth that cracks open.' (*at-Tariq*: 11-12)

In order to direct our attention from the matter of creation and the universal signs to the Quran, He *the Almighty* says: 'This is truly a decisive statement.' (*at-Tariq*: 13) This signifies that the Quran judges between the disputing parties. Further, it provides the decisive statement in all the issues it discusses. This verse indicates that disputation would arise among the Muslims themselves or between them and other groups. The decisive statement with regard to these disputations would be the Book of Allah, as the disputing parties need a third one to judge between them. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* alludes to the fact that His universe would always have some upright people with a sound



natural disposition who can adjudicate these disputations. So, the words ‘decisive statement’ indicate the existence of disputation between two parties. Consequently, He *the Almighty* either decides in favour of one of them or shows that both of them are wrong.

For this reason, we clarified that the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘And thus We have made you a medium (just) nation that you may be the bearers of witness to the people and (that) the Messenger may be a bearer of witness to you...’ (*al-Baqara*: 143) is an honour for this *ummah*. This is because He *the Almighty* sent Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* revealed the Quran to him and made him bear witness that he had conveyed Allah’s Way of Guidance to the *ummah*. Further, the Muslims are witnesses against the rest of the nations because He *the Almighty* sent the Quran to them. Witnessing against them means that these nations are on the wrong path; otherwise, we would be witnesses in their favour. It is as if He *Glorified is He* says to the believers, ‘You have been raised during a corrupt time, for both of the disputing parties are wrong. So, I did not select a witness belonging to either of them, but rather, I selected the believing group to bear witness that both of them are wrong.’

So, the Quran ‘...is truly a decisive statement.’ (*at-Tariq*: 13) It is the criterion for the ethical matters. It was sent down while all the people were in error. The people of Mecca were idolatrous and the people of the Book abandoned their Books by either distorting or concealing them. With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘It is not something to be taken lightly,’ (*at-Tariq*: 14) ‘Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* said, ‘In the Book of Allah is news for what happened before you, and information about what comes after you, and judgment for what happens between you. It is the criterion (between right and wrong) without jest. Whoever among the oppressive abandons it, Allah crushes him, and whoever seeks guidance from other than it, then Allah leaves him to stray.’ So, the Quran should not be taken as a game or jest, as it was sent down with the truth and not falsehood. Accordingly, it should be held in awe in people’s chest and be glorified in their hearts, as the one who recites or listens to it will have a lofty rank.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

إِنَّهُمْ يَكِيدُونَ كَيْدًا ۖ وَأَكِيدُ كَيْدًا ۚ (١٥) فَهَلْ الْكَافِرِينَ أَهْمَهُمْ رُؤُوسُهُ ۚ (١٦) فَهَلْ الْكَافِرِينَ أَهْمَهُمْ رُؤُوسُهُ ۚ (١٧)

**They plot and scheme [15] but so do I [16] [Prophet], let the  
disbelievers be, let them be for a while [17]  
(The Quran, *at-Tariq*: 15 - 17)**

The meaning of these verses is that Allah *the Almighty* schemes and plots against the disbelievers of Mecca because they were plotting against Islam and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This Quranic manner of expression is called '*Al-Mushakala*,' as in His saying: '...And they planned a plan, and We planned a plan while they perceived not.' (*an-Naml*: 50) This manner of expression means to mention a word expressing a linguistic meaning that does not collocate with the next word. We have explained this matter in a poet's saying,

In a clear morning, my fellows intended to have breakfast  
And sent their messenger specially to me  
The asked, 'What should we cook for you?'  
I said, 'Cook me a cloak and a shirt'

The meaning is that those people invited the poet to have breakfast with them, but he was in dire need for clothes, not for food. So he said, 'Cook me a cloak and a shirt.' He did not say, 'Sew a cloak and a shirt for me.' This is because the word 'cook' was mentioned before these words. This is the meaning of *Al-Mushakala*. Likewise, He *the Almighty* says: 'And the recompense of evil is punishment (literally, evil) like it...' (*ash-Shura*: 40). It is known that the recompense of an evil deed is a punishment. It is just called 'evil' because it is mentioned next to the word 'evil,' which is mentioned first.

Now, how can we understand the attribute of scheming and plotting when they are attributed to Allah *the Almighty*: '...and they devised plans and Allah too had arranged a plan; and Allah is the best of planners.' (*al-Anfal*: 30) Plotting and scheming mean to harm your enemy through trickery because you cannot confront him/her face to face. Plotting indicates the inability of the plotter, for if s/he had the power to confront his/enemy, s/he would do so. That is why plotting and scheming are the attributes of the weak people, as the poet says,

It is weak, but when it gets a chance,  
It kills; this is the power of the weak

When a weak person has an opportunity, s/he seizes it and never misses it, as s/he knows it will come only once. By contrast, the strong one may pardon his/her enemy because s/he can get another chance to harm him/her if s/he wants. Thus, scheming, plotting and planning are self-evidence for the weakness of the one who devises them. Such a person can only defeat his/her enemy through trickery and plotting. Scheming depends on the position of the schemer and whether or not it is known by the one against whom it is schemed. If someone is plotting against someone else while the latter knows about that plot, then it is useless, as s/he knows the plotter's limited power.

In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And they planned a plan, and We planned a plan while they perceived not.' (*an-Naml*: 50) This verse means that the disbelievers' scheme against Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* but He *the Almighty* is fully Aware of their scheme as well as their actions. However, His Scheming against them is different as they are neither aware of that scheme nor even able to avert it. Elsewhere, He *the Almighty* says: 'And when those who disbelieved devised plans against you that they might confine you or slay you or drive you away; and they devised plans and Allah too had arranged a plan; and Allah is the best of planners.' (*al-Anfal*: 30) Indeed, Allah *the Almighty* is the best of planners because His plotting is hidden from His enemies and no one can take precaution against it.

Therefore, the disbelievers are scheming against the Call because they cannot confront it face to face, but Allah *the Almighty* is fully Aware of their scheme. If He *the Almighty* attributes scheming and plotting to Himself, we cannot use them as Lofty Names for Him. That is to say that we should not say, 'Allah is the Schemer and the Plotter.' Rather, we should stop at the limits of what He *the Almighty* told us about Himself. This is because these attributes are employed in the context of the manner of expression called *Al-Mushakala*. Further, plotting and scheming mean to hide something that the plotter thinks s/he has hidden from the one s/he is scheming against. It is impermissible to attribute this meaning to Allah *the Almighty*.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says: '[Prophet], let the disbelievers be, let them be for a while.' (*at-Tariq: 17*) This verse tells Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that s/he should not eagerly wait for the punishment to hastily befall the disbelievers. After all, it will inevitably come to pass. If Allah *the Almighty* willed, He would seize them immediately. However, He *Glorified is He* wants to respite the disbelievers to purify the believing group through testing the firmness of their faith, so that only the strong believers, who can bear the hardship of the Call, remain steadfast in following the religion. So, the address here is directed to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in order to strengthen his heart. It is as if his Lord says to him, 'O Muhammad, I have not sent you to be sacrificed, for I will never forsake you. Indeed, the ultimate outcome is your victory and the prevailing of your Call.'

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '[Prophet], let the disbelievers be, let them be for a while,' (*at-Tariq: 17*) means that it is not He *the Almighty* but rather Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who gives them respite for a little while according to the requirements of his then situation. If we review the history of the Call, we find that this respite did not last long; it was just meant to educate the forces of the call to patiently endure the hardship. This respite did not last long, for Allah's Victory and the Opening came to pass soon after that. Consequently, the people embraced Allah's Religion in crowds.

the chapter of

***al-A'la***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-A'la*<sup>(1)</sup>

سَبِّحْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى ۝ (١) الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى ۝ (٢) وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَى ۝ (٣)  
وَالَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الْمَرْعَى ۝ (٤) فَجَعَلَهُ غُثَاءً أَحْوَى ۝ (٥)

**[Prophet], glorify the name of your Lord the Most High [1]  
who created [all things] in due proportion [2]  
who determined their destinies and guided them [3]  
who brought out the green pasture [4] then made it dark  
debris [5] (The Quran, *al-A'la*: 1-5)**

The context of the chapter of *al-A'la* is in harmony with that of *at-Tariq*. The latter discusses the matter of creation, stating: ‘Man should reflect on what he was created from. He is created from spurting fluid, then he emerges from between the backbone and breastbone...’ (*at-Tariq*: 5-7). Afterwards, it discusses Allah’s sustaining of the creatures through providing them with all the blessings that guarantee their survival, as in His saying: ‘By the sky and its recurring rain, by the earth that cracks open!’ (*at-Tariq*: 11-12) The chapter of *al-A'la* explains the same topics with more details.

This chapter is called *al-A'la* (the Most High) because this description is mentioned as grounds for glorifying Allah *the Almighty*: ‘[Prophet], glorify

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(1) The chapter of *Al-A'la*, counting 19 verses, is number 87 in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *At-Takwir* and before that of *Al-Layl*. In his *Tafsir*, *As-Sam'ani* mentions that *Ad-Dahhak* held the position that it was revealed in Medina. However, the first opinion, being revealed in Mecca, is the most preponderant one. See *As-Sam'ani, Tafsir*, 6/206.

the name of your Lord the Most High.' (*al-A'la*: 1) According to some narrations recorded by Imam Ahmad, At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Maja, Abu Dawud and Al-Bayhaqi, this chapter was beloved to the heart of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It was the most beloved one from among the chapters that start with glorification of Allah *the Almighty* like His saying: 'Glory be to Him Who made His servant to go on a night...' (*al-Isra*: 1); and 'Whatever is in the heavens and the earth declares the glory of Allah...' (*al-Hadid*: 1). That is why he *peace and blessings be upon him* was keen on reciting it in the Friday Prayers and in the Prayer of the two *Eids*. If Friday coincided with the day of the *Eid*, he *peace and blessings be upon him* would recite it in both occasions. That is to say that he recited it in the morning during the *Eid* Prayer and at noon during the Friday Prayer. This clearly indicates that it has some reassuring remarks. So, what are these remarks?

The first remark is that he *peace and blessings be upon him* was unlettered living among an illiterate *ummah*. When the revelation descends on him for the first time commanding him to recite, he said, 'I cannot read.' This is the natural response of the human being. However, the revelation commands him another time to read, and he gives the same response. Then the command is repeated for the third time. So, there is a dialogue between a commander and someone unable to obey the command. This is logically accepted because the command is issued from on high. Further, his response is also logical because he *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* negates his ability to read according to his human nature. He did not have the means of reading, for he learned reading neither by himself nor by a teacher.

So, what is the indication of this command? It refutes the claim of those who say that he *peace and blessings be upon him* is the author of the Quran, alleging that it is his luminous, pure thoughts. If this were the case, he would not negate his ability to read. This dialogue proves that we have two persons: a heavenly person issuing a command to read and a commanded person receiving that command. Out of His Omnipotence, Allah *the Almighty* Commands by whatever He wants. Out of his human inability, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* acknowledges that he cannot obey the command. So, both of the two parties are acting in accordance with their



true position. Now, how can the reconciliation be achieved in that situation?! The weaker party cannot solve this matter but rather the stronger one can, as He can bestow on the weaker the ability to obey the Command.

Likewise, the chapter of *al-A'la* begins with the command: '[Prophet], glorify the name of your Lord *the Most High*.' (*al-A'la*: 1) Allah *the Almighty* issues this command to the addressee, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and all his followers. The word 'glorify' means to exalt Him *the Almighty* and to categorically declare that there is no one comparable to Him in any aspect. This eliminates any delusion of similarity between the Creator and the created beings. For example, the attribute of existence is shared by Him *Glorified is He* and His creatures. So, one should negate the similarity between them and declare Allah's Existence far exalted over the creatures' existence. This is because they are not equal, for the creatures' existence came out of nothing and will ultimately be nothing. By contrast, Allah's Existence has not come out of nothing and will never turn to be nothing. Thus, as the attribute of existence is shared by the Creator and the created beings, we must hold Him *Glorified is He* far removed from being similar in this Attribute to His creatures.

We notice that when the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '[Prophet], glorify the name of your Lord *the Most High*...' (*al-A'la*: 1) was revealed, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Use it when prostrating yourself.'<sup>(1)</sup> That is why we say in our prostration to Allah *the Almighty* 'Glory be to my Lord, the Most High.' If we strictly followed the wording of the verse, we should say, 'Glory be the Name of my Lord, the Most High.' However, when the verse: '[Prophet], glorify the name of your Lord the Most High...' (*al-A'la*: 1) was revealed, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Glory be to my Lord, the Most High.'

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of U'qba ibn A'mir Al-Jahni, who said, 'When the saying of Allah: 'Glorify the name of your mighty Lord.' (al-Waqi'a: 74) was revealed, Messenger of Allah said: 'Use it when bowing, and when His saying: 'Glorify the name of your Lord the Most High.' (al-A'la: 1) was revealed, he said: Use it when prostrating yourself.' See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 17414; Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 887; Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 869; and Ad-Darimi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1344.*

The Attribute 'Most High' constitutes the grounds for glorifying Allah *the Almighty*. He *the Almighty* then mentions the grounds for being 'Most High', saying: '...who created [all things] in due proportion.' (*al-A'la*: 2) The Attribute 'Most High' is in the superlative form, as He *the Almighty* describes some of His creatures as 'high,' saying to Satan: 'Are you proud or are you of the exalted ones?' (*Sad*: 75) Here, He *the Almighty* asked Satan about the reason why he did not prostrate to Adam. After all, he is not of the exalted Angels who were not commanded to prostrate. These Angels are the worshipping Angels who have nothing to do with Adam. They are solely occupied with worshipping Allah *the Almighty*.' So, His being *the Most High* is the reason for glorifying Him *Glorified is He*.

As for Allah's saying: '...who created [all things] in due proportion, (*al-A'la*: 2) it constitutes the reason for His being 'Most High.' That is to say that He *Glorified is He* is Most High because He created. That is why He is Higher than His created beings, as they are the effect of His creative Power. As the created being is created by being affected positively by the creative Power, then the negative affection of this Power entails the non-existence of the created being.

With regard to Allah's saying: '... in due proportion...' (*al-A'la*: 2) it means that He *Glorified is He* did not create the creature in any form or image! Rather, He *Glorified is He* created wonderful creatures and formed their images perfectly without any previous pattern. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: '...who created [all things] in due proportion; who determined their destinies and guided them...' (*al-A'la*: 1-2); and 'You will not see any flaw in what the Lord of Mercy creates' (*al-Mulk*: 3). Thus, He *the Almighty* created everything with a precise account and measure that determines the genus, the kind, the character, the age and the shape. Afterwards, He *the Almighty* determined the destiny of the creatures and guided them to it.

When we reflect on the universe, we find wonders. The human being employs his/her mind to make use of the universal phenomena. This made him/her think that s/he is superior to all the universal creatures. However, the mind is not always right, because it frequently makes mistakes when it contradicts one's whims. That is why it is said, 'Whims are the flaws of the

mind.' This is because they, i.e. whims, adorn the wrong actions and incite the person to do them. So, the flaw is not in one's mind, but rather in his/her corrupt whims. This is the case with the human being.

If we carefully examine the other genera, we find that the plants come from the grains, which have the potentiality of germination, but cannot yet do that by themselves. Consequently, if the suitable land was prepared, the grains will grow; otherwise, they remain in their form. We should reflect on Allah's Omnipotence and Wisdom which are manifested in the germination of plants after seeding the soils and irrigating them. After the grain splits into two halves, a root stems from it and goes downward while a tiny bud goes upward. The root nourishment depends on the two cotyledons until it becomes strong enough to take in its nourishment from the soil. So, the grain has a potential power that sustains it until the root can take in the nourishment itself. Those who are heedless of Allah's Power in this process believe in the distinctive capillary feature in the process of taking in the nourishment. However, the capillary tube absorbs all the substances without distinguishing between the elements. As for the plant, it takes in only the elements it needs. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'And in the earth there are tracts side by side and gardens of grapes and corn and palm trees having one root and (others) having distinct roots-- they are watered with one water, and We make some of them excel others in fruit; most surely there are signs in this for a people who understand.' (*ar-Ra'd*: 4)

He *the Almighty* mentions the water because it dissolves all the elements, saying: '...they are watered with one water, and We make some of them excel others in fruit...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 4) So, who inspired the plant to take in special elements? It is Allah *the Almighty*: 'Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (to its goal).' (*Ta Ha*: 50) Afterwards, the scientists believed in the selective quality of the plant, which means that it chooses its elements from among many alternatives. That process entails the existence of a mind, so does the plant have a mind to think and choose? The scientists should not beat around the bushes and should just declare that this process is done by Allah's Power, not by the selective nourishment. It is His Power that inspired the plant to take in the beneficial elements and to leave the harmful

ones. This process is undertaken with extreme accuracy that even the thinking minds cannot do.

The thinking person may take a harmful food to see how it tastes. Further, if man is offered food after being full, s/he accepts it. On the contrary, the animal does not eat even one morsel after being satisfied however one tries to feed it. That is why we say to man, who is deceived by his/her mind and wrongly thinks that it distinguishes him/her from the rest of the creatures, 'Pay attention to the fact that Allah *the Almighty* gave to the inferior genera some features that your mind does not have.'

One of the wonders of the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...who determined their destinies and guided them...' (*al-A'la*: 3) is manifested in the tree that is deprived of water. When the soil gets dry, the tree preserves the most important elements at the expense of other secondary elements. So, it seeks the means of sustenance and clings to them until the last moment. In this case, we see its leaves falling so that the nourishment is saved for the trunk and the branches. Then the tree sacrifices the branches to save the trunk. Lastly, the trunk is sacrificed for the sake of the root. As long as the root remains sound, it can regain its power and starts the process of germination.

This process is also manifested in the human being when his/her mind does not intervene in the matter of nourishment. This is because Allah *the Almighty* does not deprive him/her of the bestowals of His being the One Who determines the destinies and guides him/her in the matter beyond his/her intervention. For example, when s/he reaches the stage of growth, all his/her nourishment is directed to the process of building the body. At that stage, the nourishment getting into the body is more than the discharged waste. This nourishment makes up the energy that the body uses during its movement. Then it is used in building the muscles and the cells. Finally, the extra nourishment is stored in the form of fats.

If one is deprived of sustenance and food, the body starts to feed itself through the stored fats. It is wonderful that the fats are one substance, but when they dissolve to nourish the body, they turn to be the various elements that the body needs. This is one of the miracles of creation. Then, if the fats are used up, the nourishment depends on the muscles and then on the bones.

It is as if the body sacrifices everything to ensure the survival of the mind, just as the tree sacrifices all its parts to save the root. These processes take place in man's body while s/he is unaware of them. S/he does not intervene in them with his/her mind; rather, they are carried out according to the Law of the One Who created everything in due proportion, determined the destinies and guided the creatures.

The Quran makes this process a universal fact, for it says in the story of Prophet Zechariah *peace be upon him* who invokes his Lord: 'My Lord! Surely my bones are weakened...' (*Maryam*: 4). The weak bones indicate that he was on the brink of death, as he no longer has any stored sustenance in his body. In the same connection, an Arab proverb reads: 'We underwent a famine that dissolved the fats, another one eliminated the flesh and a third destroyed the bones.' This signifies that the Arabs in the past were knowledgeable about this fact. It is also manifested in the one who seeks food but does not find it until the time of his/her meal passes. S/he feels as if s/he is satisfied and has eaten something already. In fact, s/he has already eaten because his/her body was nourished by the elements that Allah *the Almighty* stored in his/her body.

Modern science has shown us many of the facts that prove Allah's miraculous sign in His creation. For example, the head of the Academy of Science in New York authored a book which is generally centered on Allah's saying: '...who created [all things] in due proportion; who determined their destinies and guided them.' (*al-A'la*: 2-3) Sheikh Sayyed Qutb quoted complete chapters in his book *Fi Zhilal Al-Quran* from that book. All of the facts mentioned in it invite man to believe in Allah, the Omnipotent God. It is mentioned, for example, that sea serpents do not reproduce or carry out the process of fertilisation except in one place in the world. When it reaches the age of fertilisation, it goes to Bermuda. In one place all the sea serpents of the world gather. After the process of fertilisation, the male sea serpent dies and the female goes to its mates' home along with its offspring after giving birth to them. So, how do they know the home of their father? How do they travel that long distance? Wonderfully, one does not find an American sea serpent in the European waters or vice versa.

Further, the wonders of creation include the kingdom of the bees and ants. If we considered the accurate architectural measures, we see that the bee's hive is so precisely and accurately built. Besides its being built proportionally, the worker-bees, the males and the queen have special rooms. Each one of them has its special food suitable for its mission.

As for the ants, if one put a piece of a date or fish in a place, s/he finds that the ants gather around it after a while, without doing anything but observing it. Afterwards, another larger group comes and takes it to the hole. The scientists observe that if we count the ants carrying a quarter of a gram piece, we find they are doubled when the piece weighs half a gram.

We should ponder on the falcon whose power of sight is stronger than the telescope; and the hoopoe's sight of what is beneath the ground. We do not find it eats from the surface of the earth; rather, it pecks on the ground to get its food out of it. Further, in the story of Prophet Solomon and the hoopoe, there is an indication that it was aware of the issue of kingship and faith. Its awareness may surpass that of the understanding people. With regard to the issue of kingship, it addresses King Solomon, saying: 'I comprehend that which you do not comprehend and I have brought to you a sure information from Sheba. Surely I found a woman ruling over them, and she has been given abundance and she has a mighty throne.' (*an-Naml*: 22-23) Further, it addresses him with regard to the issue of Faith, saying: '...found her and her people adoring the sun instead of Allah, and the Satan has made their deeds fair-seeming to them and thus turned them from the way, so they do not go aright.' (*an-Naml*: 24)

Now, we should ponder on the accuracy of the Quranic manner of expression and the hoopoe's eloquence when it utters according to its knowledge, saying: 'That they do not make obeisance to Allah, Who brings forth what is hidden in the heavens and the earth...' (*an-Naml*: 25). What attracts the hoopoe's attention from among the manifestations of Allah's Power is that He *the Almighty* brings forth what is hidden. Likewise, it brings forth its sustenance from what is hidden in the earth. It knows that mere bringing forth of what is hidden is one of Allah's Signs that prove His Omnipotence. So, the hoopoe talks about the phenomenon that is related to it; in its viewpoint, the reason for prostrating to Allah *the Almighty* is that He brings forth what is hidden in the earth.

This should direct the reasonable man's attention to the fact that s/he has two ways in his/her striving to get closer to Allah *the Almighty*. S/he should worship and love Him *the Almighty* because He deserves that or because of His Blessings and Favours bestowed on him/her. All of the previous phenomena are signs of Allah's wonderful creatures which He created in due proportion. Then He determined their destinies and guided them. The reasonable person should reflect on them so that his/her mind does not deceive him/her. If one's mind does not guide him/her to Faith, then s/he is inferior to the rest of the creatures.

Allah *the Almighty* commands Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his *ummah* to glorify Him, saying: '[Prophet], glorify the name of your Lord *the Most High*.' (*al-A'la*: 1) His saying: 'Glory be to Him Who made His servant to go on a night...' (*al-Isra*': 1) proves that He *the Almighty* has been glorified since eternity before creating the glorifying beings. In other words, glorification and exaltation are affirmed for Him *the Almighty* even before the existence of the glorifying creatures. Consequently, our glorification for Him *Glorified is He* is not beneficial to Him but rather for us. The root of the word *Sabbaha* (to glorify) is mentioned in the Quran in the past form, as in His saying: 'Whatever is in the heavens and the earth declares the glory of Allah...' (*al-Hadid*: 1). Thus, the eternal glorification of Allah *the Almighty* is confirmed and it is common in all the places of the universe and at all times, in the past, the present and the future. It is done by all the creatures; all of them glorify and exalt Him, a fact which is clear in His saying: '...and there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification...' (*al-Isra*': 44).

We have previously explained that His saying: '...but you do not understand their glorification...' (*al-Isra*': 44) indicates that all the creatures really glorify Him with their special languages; not by indication as some scholars hold. Every genus has a language by which it glorified Allah *the Almighty*. These languages are known to only those on whom He *Glorified is He* bestowed the knowledge of these languages, as in the case of Prophet David *peace be upon him*. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: '...and We made the mountains, and the birds to celebrate Our praise with David; and We were the doers.' (*al-Baqara*: 79); and '...O mountains! sing praises with

him, and the birds...’ (*Saba’*: 10) So, the mountains are glorifying Allah *the Almighty* with David and anyone else. However, He *the Almighty* gave David *peace be upon him* the privilege of understanding the language of these inanimate objects. So, his glorifications corresponded to that of the mountains and birds, as if they are one team singing one ode.

Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* taught Prophet Solomon *peace be upon him* the language of the ants and the birds. He talked to them and understood their saying. Thus, all the creatures glorify Allah *the Almighty*; even if we cannot understand the language they use to do that. Further, the scholars say that one of Prophet Muhammad’s miracles is the glorification of the pebbles in his hand. The correct way to refer to this miracle is saying, ‘Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard the glorification of the pebbles in his hand.’ This is because the pebbles are glorifying whether they are in his hand or in the hand of Abu Jahl, the enemy of Islam. The privilege in the case of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is that he heard that glorification.

Moreover, one day he, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went out and found some people stopping their riding animals and talking while they were still mounted on their backs. So he said to them, ‘You should either use them for travel or dismount and sit down.’ This means that they should not use the riding animals as a sitting place because they glorify Allah *the Almighty* more than them. Further, these animals were not created in order to be used as chairs, as He says: ‘And they carry your heavy loads to regions which you could not reach but with distress of the souls...’ (*an-Nahl*: 7).

Therefore, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘[Prophet], glorify the name of your Lord the Most High...’ (*al-A’la*: 1) means that the human being should be in harmony with the universal creatures and should not be an exception to these creatures that represent one glorifying organisation. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was only sent to return the human beings to this universal harmony. It is inconceivable that the greatest blessing that man was endowed with, which is the mind, diverts him/her from glorifying Allah *the Almighty* and, therefore, s/he becomes anomalous, unlike the rest of the creatures.



We notice that the rest of the chapter in question constitutes the grounds for glorifying Allah *the Almighty*. It is as if He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Glorify Allah because He has done great Actions, such as creating the creatures in due proportion, determining their destinies, and facilitating the matter of receiving and memorising the revelation for Messenger Muhammad.’ Afterwards, the chapter puts forward some basic principles. It deals with the matter of Creed in His saying: ‘Prosperous are those who purify themselves.’ (*al-A'la*: 14); the matter of what the tongue utters: ‘Remember the name of their Lord...’ (*al-A'la*: 15); and the practical behaviour: ‘...and pray.’ (*al-A'la*: 15) Prayer is a model example for the ritual acts, as it gathers all the kinds of the acts of worship.

Allah *the Almighty* says:

سَنُقَرِّئُكَ فَلَا تَنْسَى ۖ (٦) إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ إِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ وَمَا يَخْفَى (٧) وَنُيَسِّرُكَ لِلْيُسْرَى  
 (٨) فَذَكَرْ إِن نَّفَعْتَ الذِّكْرَى (٩) سِذَّكَرْ مَنْ يَخْشَى (١٠) وَيَنْجِنَهَا الْأَشْفَى (١١)  
 الَّذِي يَصْلَى النَّارَ الْكُبْرَى (١٢) ثُمَّ لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَى (١٣) قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى (١٤)  
 وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى (١٥) بَلْ تُؤْثِرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا (١٦) وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى (١٧)  
 إِنَّ هَذَا لَفِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَى (١٨) صُحُفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى (١٩)

[Prophet], We shall teach you [the Quran] and you will not forget [6] unless God wishes; He knows both what is open and what is hidden [7] We shall show you the easy way [8] So remind, if reminding will help [9] Those who stand in awe of God will heed the reminder [10] but it will be ignored by the most wicked [11] who will enter the Great Fire [12] where they will neither die nor live [13] Prosperous are those who purify themselves [14] remember the name of their Lord, and pray [15] Yet you [people] prefer the life of this world [16] even though the Hereafter is better and more lasting [17] All this is in the earlier scriptures [18] the scriptures of Abraham and Moses [19] (The Quran, *al-A'la*: 6 - 19)

As a matter of fact, the state of the human soul is prone to change. In some cases, one may forget some religious instruction. However, Allah *the Almighty*

promises Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he will not forget the revelation, as He *the Almighty* says: '[Prophet], We shall teach you [the Quran] and you will not forget.' (*al-A'la: 6*) If this was the case with him *peace and blessings be upon him* how can we understand Allah's saying: '...and if the Satan causes you to forget, then do not sit after recollection with the unjust people...' (*al-An'am: 68*)? We should understand this verse as an instruction for his *ummah*. When a command is sent down from heaven, he *peace and blessings be upon him* should be the first one to apply it. So, if he was addressed: '...and if the Satan causes you to forget...' (*al-An'am: 68*) then when everyone else forgets, s/he should use Allah's cure for forgetfulness, that is, to not sit with those who enter into false discourses about Allah's Verses. S/he should leave them and turn away from them.

The revelation used to descend on Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with a chapter of the Quran. After the departure of the revelation, he *peace and blessings be upon him* would recite the chapter to his Companions. Those who could memorise or write it down used to do that. Afterwards, he *peace and blessings be upon him* prays and recites the chapter as it was written down. He recites every portion of the Quran in its right place in accordance with what he has dictated to the Companions. How could he *peace and blessings be upon him* be able to memorise the Quran perfectly in that way? This happened because He *the Almighty* says to him: '[Prophet], We shall teach you [the Quran] and you will not forget.' (*al-A'la: 6*) This is why he *peace and blessings be upon him* was memorising what was revealed to him. He used to dictate it to the Companions and recite it in the prayers. Despite the similar verses in the Quran, he *peace and blessings be upon him* has never made a mistake in his recitation of the Quran from memory. It is Allah's Will to reveal the Quran to him *peace and blessings be upon him* and to reassure him that he would memorise it and would not forget the position of every one of its verses.

In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...unless Allah wishes; He knows both what is open and what is hidden.' (*al-A'la: 7*) So, His decisive Will decreed that he *peace and blessings be upon him* would not forget anything of the Quran. He *Glorified is He* knows what is apparent and what is hidden.

Further, He *the Almighty* is fully Aware of the secrets and what is even more hidden than the secret. The open talk is to make the listeners hear what you say. As for the private talk, it means to confide something to someone because you do not want it to be spread among the people.

He *the Almighty* then says: 'We shall show you the easy way.' (*al-A'la*: 8) This verse signifies that He *Glorified is He* facilitates all Messenger Muhammad's matters, including the good deeds leading to the paradise and receiving, memorising and applying the revelation. So, He *the Almighty* makes the way of doing good deeds and reaching the paradise easy for him. The good deeds are called the 'easy way' because their outcome is easiness and facilitation. Further, He *the Almighty* made the religion, which is the pure monotheism, easy for him. So, He *the Almighty* facilitates the religious Laws that the Quran contains, calling for doing righteous deeds that lead to the paradise.

For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'So remind, if reminding will help.' (*al-A'la*: 9) This verse constitutes a command to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to remind the people through the Quran. This reminder, however, may not be beneficial to the one who neither believes in the Quran nor wants to embrace Islam. By contrast, the believer benefits from the reminder of the Quran because it is the useful reminder in which the righteous people find peace and tranquillity. The Quran decisively states: '...surely the reminder profits the believers.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 55)

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'Those who stand in awe of Allah will heed the reminder, but it will be ignored by the most wicked.' (*al-A'la*: 10-11) These verses show that the one who benefits from the reminder is s/he who fears Allah, His Majestic Attributes, Punishment, Wrath and Fire.

As for the most wicked who disbelieve in the religion and in Allah *the Almighty* s/he does not hope for the Reckoning, the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment. Such a person does not benefit from the reminder but rather turns away from it: '...but it will be ignored by the most wicked.' (*al-A'la*: 11) S/he is described as the 'most wicked', in the superlative form. The wicked one is s/he who commits sins, despite his/her faith. As for the most wicked, it is s/he who does not believe in the first place; s/he denies Faith and belies Messenger Muhammad and the Quran. He *the Almighty* then describes this

most wicked one, saying: '...who will enter the Great Fire, where they will neither die nor live.' (*al-A'la*: 12-13)

This means that the most wicked will suffer the extreme heat of the Fire after being thrown into it. It is the Fire of hell and the Blazing Fire. The word *Yasla* (to enter the fire) means to enter the blazing fire and to taste its heat. This verb is mentioned in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Again We do certainly know best those who deserve most to be burned therein.' (*Maryam*: 70) As for the verb *Astala*, it means to seek a piece of fire for warming, as in His saying: 'So that you may warm yourselves.' (*an-Naml*: 7)

The most wicked people will suffer the Great Fire which is terribly blazing, as it is greater and hotter than that of the worldly life. The fire of the worldly life is not that of a match, a candle, or an oven, but rather, it could be that of the great furnace that melts the iron and its heat reaches 3000 degrees. So, if this is the fire in the worldly life, so what would we think about the fire in the Hereafter? The greatest punishment in that fire is that the most wicked people will neither die nor live because they disbelieve in Allah *the Almighty* and belie His Books and Messengers. Thus, they are the guilty people, as He *the Almighty* says: 'Whoever comes to his Lord (being) guilty, for him is surely hell; he shall not die therein, nor shall he live.' (*Ta Ha*: 74) There is a stage between life and death in which the punished guilty one neither dies to alleviate the punishment nor lives a good life devoid of punishment. They will stay forever in the hellfire in that stage where they neither die nor live.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Prosperous are those who purify themselves, remember the name of their Lord, and pray.' (*al-A'la*: 14-15) The Arabic word *Aflah* (to prosper) has a tangible meaning related to the life of the created beings. It is the main reason for the sustenance of life. It refers to the one who cleaves the earth and seeds it. Afterwards, s/he irrigates it until it yields crops. The word *Aflah* is used to refer to the state of yielding a good harvest. As for the prosperity meant in the verse, it is the outcome of guidance that the believers followed and abided by. Allah's saying: 'Prosperous are those who purify themselves...' (*al-A'la*: 14) is similar to His saying: '...and this is the reward of him who has purified himself.' (*Ta Ha*: 76) The

word *zakat* refers to purity and growth. Purity means that the object is pure in itself. As for growth, it means that the object increases to be bigger than its present form.

As for His saying: 'remember the name of their Lord, and pray.' (*al-A'la*: 15) Remembering Allah *the Almighty* includes declaring His Oneness, invoking Him and inviting to Him. Praying here refers to offering the five daily prayers and praising, glorifying and invoking Him *Glorified is He* during them.

Some scholars interpret these verses as referring to *Zakat Al-Fitr*: 'Prosperous are those who purify themselves, remember the name of their Lord, and pray.' (*al-A'la*: 14-15) *Zakat Al-Fitr* is obligatory on the Muslims. One should give out the required *zakat* for his dependents before offering *Eid* Prayer. Then s/he: ...remember the name of their Lord...' (*al-A'la*: 15). This verse refers to *Eid* Prayer, which is similar to His saying: 'Therefore pray to your Lord and make a sacrifice.' (*al-Kawthar*: 2) This verse signifies the time of the greater *Eid*. The Muslims should first pray and then sacrifice. That is why the Imam of the *Eid* Prayer should offer it early so that the people can dedicate themselves to offering their sacrifice. On the contrary, the Imam on *Eid Al-Fitr* should delay the prayer so that the one who does not give out *Zakat Al-fitr* can have a chance do that. In this regard, it is reported on the authority of 'Amr ibn 'Awf that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to command the believers to give out *Zakat Al-Fitr* before offering *Eid* Prayer and he would recite Allah's saying: 'Prosperous are those who purify themselves, remember the name of their Lord, and pray.' (*al-A'la*: 14-15)

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Yet you [people] prefer the life of this world, even though the Hereafter is better and more lasting...' (*al-A'la*: 16-17) it is as if He *the Almighty* says to the people, 'You prefer the worldly life with its hardships to the Hereafter while the latter is better and more lasting.' In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'And whatever things you have been given are only a provision of this world's life and its adornment, and whatever is with Allah is better and more lasting; do you not then understand?' (*al-Qasas*: 60) If the wise person compared the worldly life to the Hereafter, s/he would choose the Hereafter. That is why

He *the Almighty* concludes the previous verse, saying: '...do you not then understand?' (*al-Qasas*: 60)

Then Allah *the Almighty* concludes the chapter in question, saying: 'All this is in the earlier scriptures, the scriptures of Abraham and Moses.' (*al-A'la*: 18-19) These two verses mean that Allah *the Almighty* did not charge this *ummah* with something other than what the previous nations were charged with. In fact, the Creed is the essence of the religious obligations that accompanied the life from the time of Adam. Here, He *the Almighty* sends Messengers to remind the heedless people throughout that long duration of the worldly life. He *the Almighty* refers to this fact by saying: 'All this is in the earlier scriptures, the scriptures of Abraham and Moses.' (*al-A'la*: 18-19)

We should clarify that the early Scriptures are not confined to Abraham's and Moses' Scriptures, as there are other revealed Scriptures. These Scriptures include what was revealed to Shayth (son of Adam) and Idris (Enoch). It is known that the Scriptures are different from the four heavenly Books, which are the Torah, the Gospel, the Quran, and the Psalms. His saying: 'All this is in the earlier scriptures, the scriptures of Abraham and Moses' (*al-A'la*: 18-19) confirms a creedal fact that does not change and is common among the Messengers. It is true that the religious laws change according to the nations, the environments, the new life issues and the mental advancement. This is the field of differences among the Messages, that is, man's movement in life. As for the creedal matters and the ritual relationship between Allah *the Almighty* and His servants, they are common among all the Messages.

The books of Hadith narrate that Abu Dharr asked Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the content of the early Scriptures. He told him that they contained examples and admonitions related to the spiritual state and not to the laws that govern the movements in life. Abu Dharr asked him *peace and blessings be upon him* to give him some example of these admonitions. So, he said, 'One of the revelations is addressed to the kings: O haughty kings who oppress the tested ones, I have not sent you to accumulate the properties of the worldly life but to respond to the call of the wronged people on My behalf, for I do not reject it even from a disbeliever.' Another admonition is: 'The wise person who is not mad should divide his

time in the worldly life into three parts: he invokes his Lord in one part, holds himself accountable in the second, and lawfully satisfies his needs in the third part. In the last part he should say, 'This part is devoted to the other parts, as I should prepare my heart during this time for the other parts.' These Scriptures also include: 'The wise person should have three matters: a craft he learns to sustain himself, preparation for the Day of Judgment and lawful pleasure.' This is the Way of Guidance that the believer should abide by to be exempted from those described in His saying: 'Yet you [people] prefer the life of this world.' (*al-A'la*: 16)

In this connection, when one of the righteous people was asked about his way of life, he said, 'I have known that I cannot escape from Allah's sight for even a blink of an eye, so I felt shy to disobey Him. I also have known that my provision will not pass me by, so I felt content with it. Further, I have known that I am in debt and no one will repay my debt on my behalf, so I preoccupied myself with it. Finally, I have known that my time of death is proceeding to me, so I prepared myself for it.' Another righteous one said, 'Devote your worship to the One you cannot dispense with. Devote your thankfulness to the one who never stops bestowing His Blessings on you. Devote your submission to the One against His Kingdom and Sovereignty you cannot rebel.'

Thus, the earlier Scriptures were faithful admonitions that educate the human being, reform his/her behaviour and make him/her undertake his/her mission in life in accordance with Allah's Commands and Prohibitions and in accordance with the principle: 'So that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor be exultant at what He has given you...' (*al-Hadid*: 23). Man should remain steadfast and firm; the events should not shake him/her, as a poet says:

Be a steadfast man like a firm molar

That chews everything, be it sweet or sour





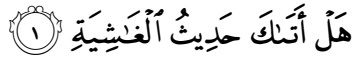
the chapter of

***al-Ghashiya***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Ghashiya* <sup>(1)</sup>



**Have you heard tell [Prophet]  
about the Overwhelming Event? [1]  
(The Quran, *al-Ghashiya*: 1)**

The one who reflects on the context of the chapter of *al-A 'la* finds it in a clear harmony with that of *al-Ghashiya*. The chapter of *al-A 'la* talks about the most wicked, the one who purifies him/herself and the recompense of each, stating: ‘...but it will be ignored by the most wicked, who will enter the Great Fire, where they will neither die nor live. Prosperous are those who purify themselves, remember the name of their Lord, and pray.’ (*al-A 'la*: 11-15) So, that chapter mentions the most wicked disbelievers and the punishment waiting for him/her; and the believer who purifies him/herself and the good reward waiting for him/her.

Afterwards, the chapter of *al-Ghashiya* confirms this meaning and emphasises it, saying: ‘On that Day, there will be downcast faces.’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 2); and ‘On that Day there will also be faces radiant with bliss.’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 8) Further, the chapter of *al-A 'la* talks about the reminder, saying: ‘So remind, if reminding will help.’ (*al-A 'la*: 9); and the chapter of *al-Ghashiya* defines

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(1) The chapter of *Al-Ghashiya*, counting 26 verses, is number 88 in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *Adh-Dhariyat* and before that of *Al-Kahf*. So, it is number 67 in the order of revelation. A Hadith narrated on the authority of An-Nu‘man ibn Bashir confers that Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him used to recite this chapter and that of *Al-A 'la* during the Eid and Friday Prayer.

Messenger Muhammad's mission with regard to reminding the people, stating: 'So [Prophet] warn them: your only task is to give warning, you are not there to control them.' (*al-Ghashiya*: 211-22)

The mission of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is to remind the people, but he is not responsible for the outcome of this reminding. This serves as alleviation for him because s/he used to overburden himself for the sake of His Call and reminding the people about it. He was about to perish because of that. Consequently, Allah *the Almighty* says to him: 'Then maybe you will kill yourself with grief, sorrowing after them, if they do not believe in this announcement.' (*al-Kahf*: 6) This matter also alleviates Messenger Muhammad's followers and those who bear the responsibility for the Call after him. They should only remind the people. After that, the recipient of the Call can either believe or disbelieve according to his/her free will. This is because the Callers have no control over the people.

Further, the chapter of *al-A'la* discusses the way of prosperity in His saying: 'Prosperous are those who purify themselves.' (*al-A'la*: 14) This way is divided into three parts: the belief, the utterance and the practice. One should purify him/herself and his/her Creed from polytheism; this is the creedal side. As for the tongue, its role is to faithfully: '...remember the name of their Lord...' (*al-A'la*: 15) As for His saying: '...and pray...' (*al-A'la*: 15) it represents the practical side of the prosperous Way. It is as if the chapter summarises the three sides of Islam: the belief in the heart, the utterance of the tongue and application of the limbs.

The chapter of *al-Ghashiya* mentions the opposite way that the people set for themselves. It is a tiring way for the one who follows it. It is recognised by all the people, even the atheists among them, that man measures the objective and the fruit of his/her activity before pursuing that objective. That objective must make up the hardship of reaching it. Moreover, the pleasure and the rest that s/he gets must outweigh the effort exerted for their sake. If the fruit is equal to the effort, then it is useless. So, the wise person pursues the objective that gives him/her more than the effort exerted to attain to it.

As for the deeds of the wicked people, they are in vain, a fact which is crystal clear in His Saying: 'on that Day, there will be downcast faces, [2]

toiling and weary [3] as they enter the blazing Fire. [4]' (*al-Ghashiya*: 2-4) this is actually the consequence of their misdeeds, which are none but an unprofitable bargain and fruitless endeavour. If those with downcast faces are striving and toiling and yet receive no reward, then they will be truly losers. So, what would it be like if they will also enter the blazing fire after their toiling?! As a matter of fact, the intellectual foundation of those people's work is wrong and manifests improper understanding of life. Thus, one of Allah's Blessings is that He *the Almighty* set an objective for mankind, affirming to them that firm adherence to it will for sure lead them to easiness, pleasure and enjoyment. The chapter of *al-Ghashiya* tells us about all these purposes. As usual, when the Quran presents an unseen matter, it affirms it with a similar, tangible one.

The chapter of *al-Ghashiya* starts with the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Have you heard tell [Prophet] about the Overwhelming Event?' (*al-Ghashiya*: 1) Here, the Questioner is Allah *the Almighty*; the questioned one is Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; and the question is about *al-Ghashiya* (The Overwhelming Event), which is one of the names of the Day of Judgment. He *Glorified is He* is far removed from posing a question to seek understanding something, for He only questions about something to affirm its reality. This is due to the fact that if someone affirms the reality of the subject of the question by him/herself, this constitutes a statement. However, if s/he asks about that subject, then the answer constitutes a confirmation on the part of the questioned person concerning the reality of that subject.

This manner of expression is also used when Allah *the Almighty* addresses Messenger Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* saying: 'Did We not relieve your heart for you [Prophet].' (*ash-Sharh*: 1) Instead of telling him *peace and blessings be upon him* that He *the Almighty* relieved his heart for him, He *the Almighty* makes him acknowledge this fact and say: 'Yes, my Lord, You relieved my heart for me.' So, the question here is confirmatory, as it makes him *peace and blessings be upon him* fully recognize what He *the Almighty* has done to him. If He *Glorified is He* had put forward this fact in a statement, some people might have questioned its trueness. That is why the question was posed to the one for whom the heart was relieved in order that his affirmative

answer would confirm this fact. Thus, the benefit of using a question instead of a statement in this context is to plainly affirm the topic in question. Further, in the aforementioned verse, there is another aspect of rhetoric, that is, the interrogation is posed in the negative form: ‘Did We not relieve your heart for you [Prophet].’ (*ash-Sharh*: 1) He *the Almighty* did not say, ‘Did We relieve your heart for you?’ It is true that both formulas almost bear the same meaning, but the negative one negates any allusion to the right answer.

So, the Saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Have you heard tell [Prophet] about the Overwhelming Event?’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 1) is a way of showing the greatness of the subject of question because it is the momentous event that man should carefully reflect on and pay full attention to. Once Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard: ‘Have you heard tell [Prophet] about the Overwhelming Event?’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 1), he knew that he should be attentive to the answer that Allah *the Almighty* would provide about that event. The answer is then provided directly:

وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ خَاشِعَةٌ ۖ عَامِلَةٌ نَّاصِبَةٌ ۖ تَصْلَىٰ نَارًا حَامِيَةً ۖ  
تُسْقَىٰ مِن عَيْنٍ آٰنِيَةٍ ۖ لَّيْسَ لَهُمْ طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِن ضَرِيعٍ ۖ  
لَّا يَسْمَنُونَ وَلَا يُغْنِيٰ مِن جُوعٍ

**On that Day, there will be downcast faces [2] toiling and weary [3] as they enter the blazing Fire [4] and are forced to drink from a boiling spring [5] with no food for them except bitter dry thorns [6] that neither nourish nor satisfy hunger [7] (The Quran, *al-Ghashiya*: 2-7)**

Allah *the Almighty* defines the Overwhelming Event through its calamities. It is the disaster that strikes the people and overwhelms them with its calamities. They will find no way out and nowhere to escape because that Event encompasses them from all directions. The meaning of ‘overwhelming’ is clearly mentioned in His saying: ‘...and over them coverings (of hell-fire)...’ (*al-A‘raf*: 41); His saying about Pharaoh and his forces when the sea surrounded them: ‘...but the sea-water completely overwhelmed them and covered them up.’ (*Ta Ha*: 78); ‘And when a wave like mountains covers

them they call upon Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience...’ (*Luqman*: 32); and: ‘Or like utter darkness in the deep sea: there covers it a wave above which is another wave, above which is a cloud...’ (*an-Nur*: 40). So, the overwhelming matter refers to the disaster and the calamity that surrounds the person and overwhelm him/her from all directions, so that s/he finds no salvation or way out. The word ‘*al-Ghashiya*’ is mentioned in this chapter and in that of *Yusuf* wherein Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Do they then feel secure that there may come to them an extensive chastisement from Allah or (that) the hour may come to them suddenly while they do not perceive?’ (*Yusuf*: 107) The books of Hadith report that when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* passed by a woman reciting: ‘Have you heard tell [Prophet] about the Overwhelming Event?’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 1), he said, ‘Yes, the news of the Overwhelming Event has come to me.’

Allah *the Almighty* then gives us some pictures of the calamities of the Day of Judgment, saying: ‘On that Day, there will be downcast faces.’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 2) This means that on the Overwhelming Day some faces will be humble and humiliated because they did not humble themselves willingly towards Allah *the Almighty* in the worldly life. Now, in the Hereafter, they will be forcibly humble and downcast, as they were stripped of all the means of making choices. All the movement will be conditional on Allah’s Will; He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To Allah, the One, the Subduer (of all).’ (*Ghafir*: 16) The faces which refused to surrender themselves to Allah *the Almighty* in the worldly life will be forced to do that on the Day of Judgment.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* describes these faces as: ‘toiling and weary.’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 3) This shows that these people worked hard and strived painstakingly yet they did not consider the right objective of their toil. In the worldly life, they did not pursue the beneficial, positive and faithful work whose good reward is greater than any worldly hardship many times. As long as they did not consider the right objective, their toil and work were catastrophically detrimental to them. Instead of bringing about a good reward, the punishment was the recompense of that toil.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘as they enter the blazing Fire.’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 3), it is the recompense of the one who strives after his/her

interest, that of his/her children, his/her position and his/her prestigious rank. This is actually a foolish endeavour in life, as He *the Almighty* says elsewhere about such people: 'And We will proceed to what they have done of deeds, so We shall render them as scattered floating dust.' (*al-Furqan*: 23) Why? This is because they worked for the sake of an objective other than Allah's Pleasure and were heedless of Him *Glorified is He*. In fact, every worker demands the recompense of his/her work from the one s/he is working for. So, how can the one who worked for anyone other than Allah *the Almighty* demand his/her recompense from Him *Glorified is He*? That is why a Hadith in this regard reads: '...You did but do so that it might be said [of you...and so it was said.]'<sup>(1)</sup> This meaning is also clarified in His saying: 'The parable of those who disbelieve in their Lord: their actions are like ashes on which the wind blows hard on a stormy day; they shall not have power over anything out of what they have earned...' (*Ibrahim*: 18); and 'And (as for) those who disbelieve, their deeds are like the mirage in a desert, which the thirsty man deems to be water; until when he comes to it he finds it to be naught, and there he finds Allah, so He pays back to him his reckoning in full...' (*an-Nur*: 39). In the Hereafter, when these people ask for the recompense of their deeds, it will be said to them: '...You did away with your good things in your life of the world and you enjoyed them for a while...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 20).

These verses portray how foolish these people's deeds were in the worldly life. If the recompense were only doing away with their deeds as scattered floating dust, it would be easy to some extent. However, their deeds incur punishment on them: 'as they enter the blazing Fire.' (*al-Ghashiya*: 3) The water that puts out the fire and reduces its heat will increase the heat of the fire on the Day of Judgment. Then Allah *the Almighty* says: 'and are forced to drink from a boiling spring.' (*al-Ghashiya*: 5) So, the water spring from which they are forced to drink is terribly hot, as He *the Almighty* says elsewhere: '...and if they cry for water, they shall be given water like molten brass which will scald their faces; evil the drink and ill the resting-place.' (*al-Kahf*: 29)

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(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 152/1905; Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 8277; An-Nasa'i, As-Sunnan Al-Kurbra, Hadith no. 4330; and Abu U'wana, Musnad, Hadith no. 7885.



As for their food, it is not cooler than their drink, for He *the Almighty* then says: ‘with no food for them except bitter dry thorns.’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 6) *Ad-Dari* ‘ is a thorny, green plant known to the Arabs. It is then described as: ‘neither nourish nor satisfy hunger.’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 7) Similarly, Allah *the Almighty* says elsewhere: ‘Surely the tree of the *Zaqqum*, [43] Is the food of the sinful [44] Like dregs of oil; it shall boil in (their) bellies, [45] Like the boiling of hot water. [46]’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 43-46) This is their food which differs according to the severity of the punishment. As there are ranks of pleasure according to the degree of belief, there are also levels of torment according to the degree of disbelief. The chapter in question starts with mentioning the recompense of the disbelievers because it is more suitable for the context of the Overwhelming Event. So, talking about the reward of faith was mentioned after the disbelievers’ punishment.

The verses under discussion portray the faces of the disobedient and the disbelieving people, telling how their toil and weariness in the worldly life led to perishing and loss. Further, these faces will be downcast and humiliated. They will be toiling and weary, dragging chains and shackles in the valleys of the hell. So, these faces will gather between the hardship of tiredness and that of pain. It is important to note that when the Quran describes the punishment for us, it does so according to the meanings available in the language, the addressees’ ability to understand the perceptions and the human intellectual abilities. As for the reality of pleasure and punishment, it is beyond the human perception. This is due to the fact that the language consists of words used to convey certain meanings, which must exist first. So, if the paradise and hell are unseen and unknown to us, then there are no words to express their reality. That is why there is a Hadith about the pleasures of the paradise, reading: ‘Such things as no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of, and nobody has ever thought of.’<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Prophet Muhammad *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Allah said, ‘I have prepared for My pious worshipers such things as no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of, and nobody has ever thought of.’ And that is testified to in Allah’s Book: ‘No soul knows what is kept hidden (in reserve) for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do.’ (*as-Sajda*: 17) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 4779; Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 2/2824.

Then the context of the chapter directs our attention to the opposite position of the believers about whom Allah *the Almighty* says:

وُجُوهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَّاعِمَةٌ ۖ لِّسَعْيِهَا رَاضِيَةٌ ۖ فِي جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ ۖ  
لَّا تَسْمَعُ فِيهَا لَغِيَةً ۖ فِيهَا عَيْنٌ جَارِيَةٌ ۖ فِيهَا سُرُرٌ مَّرْفُوعَةٌ ۖ  
وَأَكْوَابٌ مَوْضُوعَةٌ ۖ وَنَمَارِقُ مَصْفُوفَةٌ ۖ وَزَرَارِيُّ مَبْثُوثَةٌ ۖ

**On that Day there will also be faces radiant with bliss [8]  
well pleased with their labour [9] in a lofty garden [10]  
where they will hear no idle talk [11] with a flowing spring [12]  
raised couches [13] goblets placed before them [14]  
cushions set in rows [15] and carpets spread [16]  
(The Quran, *al-Ghashiya*: 8 - 16)**

We should compare these radiant faces to the downcast, humiliated and humble ones which are anxious about the punishment they will suffer. As for the faces of the believers, they are radiant with bliss. They are filled with joy, happiness and brightness. In fact, their faces are indescribable. However, we see similar descriptions in the worldly life for the radiant, happy faces which are attractive and bright. They indicate the contentment of the souls of such people, and the peace, faith, tranquility and serenity that they enjoy.

So, with regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘On that Day there will also be faces radiant with bliss, [8] well pleased with their labour [9]’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 8-9), it means that on the Day of Judgment some faces will be blessed. They will be content with their labour because they have seen its fruit and happy outcome. This is the opposite position of the toiling, weary faces that ‘...enter the blazing Fire.’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 4) Both of the two groups toiled, but the difference between the outcomes of their labour is far great. How blissful is the one whose labour leads him/her to the paradise and its pleasures; and how wretched is the one whose labour leads him/her to the blazing fire! The wise person seriously considers the consequences of any action before s/he proceeds to do it, and considers also the ultimate destination before starting his/her journey. The people with radiant faces did not reach the good objective except through obedience and following the true Way of Guidance.

As for the people with downcast faces, they acted foolishly and considered the affairs with narrow, temporal view. So, they were content with their fleeting, underrated pleasure in the worldly life instead of the eternal, everlasting pleasure in the Hereafter.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘... in a lofty garden, [10] where they will hear no idle talk. [11]’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 10-11) The garden is high in position and in rank; that is why the people will hear no idle talk in it. The word *Laghiyah* refers to the false, valueless talk. This description alludes to the fact that the cause of the corruption that the world suffers from is none but the falsehood which brought about anxiety, confusion, fear, hatred, enmity and hostility. We suffer falsehood with regard to creed, thought, words and labour. That is why the paradise is far removed from having any kind of falsehood. This is because it is the home of the righteous people’s bliss; they enjoy its tranquility, quietness, peace and stability. When falsehood has existed in our life, we have witnessed the opposite of the previous qualities. Nowadays, the society is suffering from the noise and the clamour of life. Further, its members, after enjoying peace and stability, now suffer from anxiety and fear.

For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* describes the people of the paradise and the reason for their success, saying: ‘Successful indeed are the believers, [1] Who are humble in their prayers, [2] And who keep aloof from what is vain. [3]’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 1-3) It is as if the cause of the corruption of people’s lives is the different kinds of falsehood, including that of thought, creed, word and labour. That is why the absence of idle talk is considered one of the pleasures of the paradise. This is because the worldly life is governed by the causal factors and man’s freedom of choice, while s/he is governed in the Hereafter by the Ultimate Causer *Glorified is He*. Consequently, the idle talk that some people use to gain profits and fruits effortlessly will not happen in the Hereafter. In the Hereafter, the people of the paradise have whatever they want once they think about it; it needs neither labour nor trickery. There will be no mutual appropriation or transgression with regard to the rights. As there is no false, idle talk, then the people of the paradise enjoy absolute safety, serenity and quietness.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* tells us about the material sustenance of the human being, saying: ‘... with a flowing spring...’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 12). As a

matter of fact, having a water spring was the ultimate pleasure of the Arab person in the past. It was sufficient for him/her to have a well, so what would we think if s/he will effortlessly have a flowing water spring in the paradise? This matter indicates that the bounties of the paradise are not limited to providing the basic needs, for there is also a source of pleasure and delight. The flow of the water is the result of the abundance of the spring. This reassures the people of the paradise that water will never cease to exist and will ceaselessly overflow, so that they can take what they need from it. For example, there is a difference between the one who, due to the scarcity of water, makes ablution with the water of a small container and the one who makes it with the water of a tap or river. Thus, the flowing spring reassures us about the source of life. Further, the mere existence of water in a place is a manifestation of Allah's Graces. For instance, the people who live in palaces are keen on having a fountain, as the sight of the water delights the soul.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'raised couches, [13] goblets placed before them, [14] cushions set in rows, [15] and carpets spread. [16]' (*al-Ghashiya*: 13-16) These are some of the pleasures of the paradise. The 'raised couches' is one of the best kinds of pleasure for the Arabs in the past. That is because they used to sleep on the ground and get disturbed by the pebbles that affect their sides and the insects that sting them. Further, the people of the paradise will have goblets filled with drink. They are placed before them so that they exert no effort to have them. As for the cushions which are set in rows, the people of the paradise will lean on them to have rest. With regard to the carpets which are spread, they are very luxurious. All of these pleasures were related to the Arabs who were the first people to be addressed by these verses. We have previously said that the pleasure is measured according to the environment and the situation of the one who receives it. It should befit his/her abilities and conceptions about pleasure. The previous descriptions neither limit nor define the reality of pleasure in the paradise. They just make it easy for us to understand a glimpse of that reality.

Then the verses direct out attention to the tangible world and invite us to think and reflect on Allah's creatures. He *the Almighty* says:

أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ ﴿١٧﴾ وَإِلَى السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ ﴿١٨﴾  
وَإِلَى الْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ ﴿١٩﴾ وَإِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ ﴿٢٠﴾

**Do the disbelievers not see how rain clouds are formed [17]  
how the heavens are lifted [18] how the mountains are raised  
high [19] how the earth is spread out? [20]  
(The Quran, *al-Ghashiya*: 17 - 20)**

Allah *the Almighty* directs our attention from the unseen realm of the paradise and hell to the perceived, tangible world. The scene herein is related to the life of the Bedouin Arab who prefers the camels to all the rest of properties. So, He *the Almighty* calls the people to carefully reflect on the creation of the camel as it has many wonders and signs that certainly merit close reflection. This is also the case with the rest of the universal signs that He *Glorified is He* then mentions: ‘how the heavens are lifted, [18] how the mountains are raised high, [19] how the earth is spread out? [20] (*al-Ghashiya*: 18-20) All these phenomena are known to the Bedouin Arab living in the desert. His/her lifestyle necessitates moving and travelling which requires the existence of camels to carry the heavy luggage and seek a new pasture. In the desert, the Arabs see nothing but a flat earth, high heaven and well established, lofty mountains. The Quran addresses the Arabs by the language they understand and by the signs of Allah’s Omnipotence that they see around them. His omnipotence is clearly manifested in the creation of the camels, their power, shapes, forms and suitability for the desert life. As all the manifestations of the camel are signs of the Creator’s Omnipotence, He *the Almighty* calls us to reflect on its creation.

Let us look at the camels’ hoofs, for example; why are they different from that of the donkeys and the horses? Further, the camel was created to carry heavy objects and to travel long distances that is why it is called ‘the ship of the desert.’ It is also big in size and heavy in weight. So, the camel’s hoofs are suitable for its function; are not they similar to the car tires that man has made to reduce the car’s friction with the earth? Despite the unevenness and the difficulty of crossing the desert, the camels can travel through it smoothly that the travelers do not feel any disturbances. The height of the camel itself is a

sign because it is walking in the desert which is full of sand and dust. This height makes the rider above the level of the dust which the camel hoofs provoke. Imagine if there is a flock of camels or goats walking together, how great the dust they provoke would be! Despite that, the rider of the camel is not affected by that dust as s/he is riding on its high back. Likewise, there are signs in the camel's ear, eye and stomach. Its endurance of hunger and thirst for days are also other signs. Each of these is one of the wonders of creation that shows the Omnipotence of the Creator. That is why He *the Almighty* encourages us to reflect on His creation, as it clearly shows His Omnipotence, Will and Wisdom.

Despite the aforementioned signs of the camel, including its big size and power, a child can ride it and play with it. This is the utmost sign of making it subservient to the human being. Is not it a wonder of creation that man can make the camel kneel down to load the luggage onto it? If it remained standing, it would be difficult for us to load them onto its back. Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* makes it able to carry these loads even if they are heavy without refusing to do so. It is an example of patience and endurance; that is why it is said about the long journeys, 'We use the camels to reach them.'

Moreover, the camel has sensations and feels about its owner and finds harmony with him/her. For example, it walks fast when it hears the sound of the chanting driver. It is as if it understands the song and feels it. In this connection, it is narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'O Anjasha! Drive slowly (the camels) with the glass vessels (women)!'<sup>(1)</sup> He was driving the camels very fast, so their riders were hurt. Besides, the camel is useful in many things; we eat its meat, drink the milk of the she-camel, use its fur and make tents from its skin. Even its urine is used as medicine for some illnesses, as some scholars say. It is as if it provides the essential requirements of life.

When Allah *the Almighty* directs our attention to the natural signs around us, He pays our heed to our mission in life. It is as if He *Glorified is He* says to

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 6149; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 70/2323.*

the reasonable, discerning man, ‘Your activity in life should be positive, beneficial, and fruitful. It should be similar to the movement of the camel in the desert; the earth that split out to allow the plant to grow; the sky from which the rain descends; and the mountains when they break up to give us fertility and growth.’ It is as though these four signs are one correlated and interdependent system. After telling us about the unseen matter of the downcast faces and the radiant ones and also the four tangible signs, the verses of this chapter say to man, ‘Pay attention to your role in life, for you were not created in vain, and are not left neglected.’ Allah *the Almighty* then says:

فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ ﴿٢١﴾ لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيِّرٍ ﴿٢٢﴾  
إِلَّا مَنْ تَوَلَّى وَكَفَرَ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَيُعَذِّبُهُ اللَّهُ الْعَذَابَ الْأَكْبَرَ ﴿٢٤﴾  
إِنَّ إِلَيْنَا إِيَابَهُمْ ﴿٢٥﴾ ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا حِسَابَهُمْ ﴿٢٦﴾

**So [Prophet] warn them: your only task is to give  
warning [21] you are not there to control them [22]  
As for those who turn away and disbelieve [23] God will  
inflict the greatest torment upon them [24] It is to Us  
they will return [25] and then it is for Us to call them to  
account [26] (The Quran, *al-Ghashiya*: 21 - 26)**

The address here is directed to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. His Lord *Glorified is He* says to him: ‘So [Prophet] warn them: your only task is to give warning.’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 21) This verse defines his *peace and blessings be upon him* mission; he is only required to remind the people and is not thus responsible for the outcome of this reminding. In other words, he is not responsible for people’s belief or disbelief after delivering the Message to them. Elsewhere, his Lord says to him: ‘So remind, if reminding will help.’ (*al-A‘la*: 9); and ‘Nothing is (incumbent) on the Messenger but to deliver (the message)...’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 99). This serves as alleviation for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Here, Allah *the Almighty* says to him: ‘you are not there to control them.’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 22) This verse means that he *peace and blessings be upon him* should not use the power to coerce the people to believe, as this is not his

mission. Similarly, He *the Almighty* says: ‘...and you are not one to compel them...’ (*Qaf*: 45). He *the Almighty* does not want His servant to forcibly, but rather willingly, come to Him. As we have said, ‘He *the Almighty* wants the hearts, not the bodies.’ This is because He *Glorified is He* is Self-Sufficient and does not need His creation. If He wished to make them all believe, He would create them with the quality of the Angels who do not disobey His command and do as they are commanded. This proves that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* does not bring anything from his own self, for all what he conveys is a revelation from Allah *the Almighty*.

As for His saying: ‘As for those who turn away and disbelieve...’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 23), it shows that the disbelievers are excluded from His Saying: ‘you are not there to control them.’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 22) This eliminates the idea that the opponent of Messenger Muhammad and the true Way of Guidance can escape from the Divine Justice or Allah’s Control. So, He *Glorified is He* reminds the disbelievers about the consequences of the misdeeds, saying: ‘As for those who turn away and disbelieve, [23] Allah will inflict the greatest torment upon them. [24]’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 23-24) Thus, the matter will not end with the coming of the death, for there is another eternal life: ‘It is to Us they will return, [25] and then it is for Us to call them to account. [26]’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 25-26) They will return to Allah *the Almighty* in the Hereafter, as He will for sure hold them accountable for their misdeeds.

We invoke Allah *the Almighty* to make us from the people with radiant faces; not to be distracted from the beneficial labour in life by the vain one; and to make us successful in everything we do or abstain from.



the chapter of

***al-Fajr***



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

**T**he chapter of *Al-Fajr*<sup>(1)</sup> (The Dawn)

وَالْفَجْرِ ۝١ وَلَيَالٍ عَشْرٍ ۝٢ وَالشَّفْعِ وَالْوَتْرِ ۝٣  
وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَسَّرَ ۝٤ هَلْ فِي ذَلِكَ قَسَمٌ لِّذِي حِجْرِ ۝٥

**By the Daybreak [1] by the Ten Nights [2]  
by the even and the odd [3] by the passing night—[4]  
is this oath strong enough for a rational person? [5]  
(The Quran, *al-Fajr*: 1-5)**

The previous chapter *al-Ghashiya* starts with the following interesting question: ‘Have you heard tell [Prophet] about the Overwhelming Event?’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 1) This actually prepares the minds to receive the news about the wondrous subject of the question. Out of Allah’s Benevolence, He tells us about the Overwhelming Event and its first manifestation that brings people’s measures’ upside down. The deeds of those who toiled and worked hard in the field of falsehood and error were the cause of their hardships and their admittance into the hellfire. Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* mentions the antithetical position of the people with radiant faces. He *Glorified is He* presents these pictures so that we accept His Way of Guidance in life, exactly like the trader who plans to gain profits from his/her trade and not to lose anything from it. According to the scale of the trade, one should sell by more than what

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(1) The chapter of *Al-Fajr*, counting 20 verses and 129 words, is number 89 in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *Al-Layl* and before that of *Ad-Duha*. These three consecutive chapters are entitled with the names of three times: the night, the daybreak and the morning brightness.

s/he has bought and take more than what s/he gives; otherwise, the bargain is unprofitable and the trade perishes.

The chapter of *al-Ghashiya* is concluded with the following fact: 'It is to Us they will return, [25] and then it is for Us to call them to account. [26]' (*al-Ghashiya*: 25-26) Here, it is clearly stated that as long as He *Glorified is He* is the One Who created people Alone, their returning and the account are exclusive only for Him *the Almighty* without any partner. In other words, they will not return to anyone but Him *Glorified is He* and will not be held accountable except by Him. When, He *the Almighty* promises the people of faith with good reward and threatens the people of disbelief with evil punishment, His Promise and Threat will inevitably come to pass. This is because He *the Almighty* is the Omnipotent that no one can prevent from doing what He wants.

Now, the chapter of *al-Fajr* starts with the following Oaths: 'By the Daybreak, [1] by the Ten Nights, [2] by the even and the odd, [3] by the passing night —[4]' (*al-Fajr*: 1-4) We have previously said that Allah *the Almighty* can swear by whatever He wants about anything. As for us, we must not swear except by Him *the Almighty*. He *the Almighty* swears by *al-Fajr* (The daybreak) which linguistically means the wide hole. We use this word to refer to the daylight that breaks the darkness of the night. It is as if the daylight was veiled by the darkness of the night and then the daybreak penetrates into it widely and plainly. That is why it is called 'daybreak'. In fact, anyone who violates the true Way of Guidance is called *Al-Fajr* (transgressor); it is as if s/he breaks the Legislation and the Way of Guidance. The one who ponders on the movement of the day and night takes the dawn that breaks the darkness of the night as a proof of the changeability of the universe. It is constantly changing, and that is why there must exist Unchangeable One Who causes this change. That alteration is not simple; rather, it takes place between two extremes, the day and night, that only the Omnipotent Creator of the universe can bring about. So, the verse in question directs our attention to the necessity of reflection on the signs and creation and how Allah's Power wonderfully brought them into existence.

The word 'daybreak' indicates that the dawn gets the world out of its quietness to a beneficial, fruitful movement in the daylight. That is why the daybreak is one of Allah's signs that certainly merit being sworn by. In fact,

Allah *the Almighty* does not swear except by the great, mighty things. The importance of the daybreak does not reduce that of the night, for each of them carry out its function that Allah *the Almighty* prescribed. That is why He *the Almighty* says: ‘By the enshrouding night, [1] by the radiant day, [2] by His creation of male and female! [3] The ways you take differ greatly. [4]’ (*al-Layl*: 1-4) He *Glorified is He* presents these signs together to tell us that they are not contradictory but rather complementary – they are interdependent and fulfil a specific function in life. The need of the night for the day is similar to the need of the male to the female and vice versa. This represents the harmony that connects the universal phenomena together.

It is not in the interest of the man or the universe that either of the day or night lasts forever; or that either the male or the female acts discriminately against each other. This is contrary to the nature that Allah *the Almighty* placed in His creation. For this reason, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Say: Tell me, if Allah were to make the night to continue incessantly on you till the day of resurrection, who is the god besides Allah that could bring you light? Do you not then hear? [71] Say: Tell me, if Allah were to make the day to continue incessantly on you till the day of resurrection, who is the god besides Allah that could bring you the night in which you take rest? Do you not then see? [72]’ (*al-Qasas*: 71-72) Thus, the opposite universal phenomena, like the day and night, are not contradictory but rather complementary and collaborating. Each phenomenon carries out a specific function that the opposite one cannot do.

Finally, we notice harmony and correlation between the chapter of *Al-Ghashiya* and *Al-Fajr*. The former chapter talks about the Overwhelming Event which is the calamity that surrounds the people and encompasses them with its disasters. No one can escape from such a calamity. Here, in the chapter of *Al-Fajr*, Allah *the Almighty* swears by the daybreak. It is as if the two chapters are opposite to each other in the sense we have explained.

The daybreak that Allah *the Almighty* swears by is not only related to the emergence of light that breaks darkness and removes the night; is it also related to a ritual act, that is, the Prayer by which the believer starts his/her day, stands before his/her Lord and receives his/her provision from Him *Glorified is He*. This is because He *the Almighty* says afterwards: ‘by the Ten

Nights, [2] by the even and the odd. [3]' (*al-Bayyina*: 2-3) So, He *the Almighty* swears by *Al-Fajr* which could refer to the time of the daybreak or *Al-Fajr* Prayer. This prayer is one of the most important acts of worship because it is offered at the beginning of our labour in life and by which we receive the Help of Allah *the Almighty* Who is the Creator of this life. Further, the daybreak is the most enjoyable time for sleep. Consequently, offering prayer at that time is the most difficult act of worship for the hypocrites, as it makes them wake up and deprives them of the enjoyment of rest and sleep. Talking about *Al-Fajr* Prayer after the Overwhelming Event is meaningful. It is as if He *the Almighty* says to us, 'Pay attention to the fact that the one who keeps up *Al-Fajr* Prayer will be saved from the Overwhelming Event.'

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* swears by the Ten Nights. The exegetes hold many views about the meaning of the Ten Nights, including the first ten nights of *Al-Muharram* or *Dhu Al-Hijja* or the last ten nights of *Ramadan*. However, the preponderant view is what was narrated on the authority of Jabir, *Allah be pleased with him*, that they are the first ten nights of *Dhu Al-Hijja*. Here arises a question, which is, 'Why do the Ten Nights of *Dhu Al-Hijja* merit a high rank that Allah *the Almighty* swears by them?' Scholars say that this is due to the fact that it is during these days that the believer totally completes and perfects his/her Lord's Way of Guidance and the religious obligations imposed on him/her. This is because s/he performs pilgrimage which is the last among the five Pillars of Islam. In these nights, the people gather from everywhere to perform pilgrimage. It is as if this gathering completes the Pillars of Islam.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* swears by the even and the odd prayers, saying: 'by the even and the odd.' (*al-Fajr*: 3) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clarified that the prayer is either even or odd. For example, the Noon Prayer is even because it consists of four units of prayer while *Al-Maghrib* is odd because it consists of three units. He *the Almighty* then says: 'by the passing night.' (*al-Fajr*: 4) Here, He *Glorified is He* swears by the night, which is one of the signs of creation that passes.

The chapter in question starts with these Oaths, so where is the subject of these Oaths? The oath is used to affirm its subject, that is, Allah *the Almighty*

takes Oaths to confirm the truthfulness of a particular subject. Now, what is the subject here? What is mentioned after the Oath is His saying: ‘Is this oath strong enough for a rational person?’ (*al-Fajr*: 4) Obviously, this is a question and not the subject of the Oath. Some scholars say that we can deduce the subject from the previous saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘It is to Us they will return, [25] and then it is for Us to call them to account. [26]’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 25-26) So, the affirmed subject would be: the people will be resurrected - as returning to Him *Glorified is He* signifies the Resurrection. Another possible interpretation is to consider the verse mentioned after the Oaths a proof of the subject of the Oaths but not the subject itself. That is to say that His saying: ‘Is this oath strong enough for a rational person?’ (*al-Fajr*: 4) is a confirmatory interrogation which proves the issue in question. This manner is stronger than presenting the issue in a statement. He *the Almighty* is fully sure that the answer of the rational, pure person must be in harmony with His Will. S/he must affirm that these Oaths are enough for a rational person. The interrogation makes the addressee affirm the issue instead of being told about it, which places more emphasis on the issue in question. In this way, we conclude the subject of the Oath through the confirmatory interrogation.

Let us discuss the last Oath which is found in His saying: ‘by the passing night.’ (*al-Fajr*: 4) Does the night pass or is it caused to pass? It is known that the night is caused to pass, but the Quranic manner of expression personified the night, making it an animate object because it has a destination to reach and a function to fulfil. That is why He *the Almighty* says: ‘by the passing night.’ (*al-Fajr*: 4) Likewise, He *the Almighty* says elsewhere: ‘And the night when it departs, [33] And the daybreak when it shines. [34]’ (*al-Muddaththir*: 33-34); and ‘And the morning when it brightens.’ (*at-Takwir*: 18) Thus, the Quran makes these creatures animate beings. It is as if the night moves to reach its destination and that is why the action is attributed to it. So, the night is personified through changing it from the abstract meaning to the tangible one, and even to be a living being. In fact, all of Allah’s creatures have a life that befits them and complies with the law of their creation.

So, when we read: ‘Is this oath strong enough for a rational person?’ (*al-Fajr*: 4), we say, ‘Yes, our Lord, the things that you have sworn by are enough to

convince the discerning and reasonable people.’ The Arabic word *Al-Hijr* refers to the mind because it prevents the person from doing anything wrong or evil. The Arabic word *Al-'Aql* (mind) refers to the rope by which the camel is tied up so that it does not escape. Likewise, the mind constrains man’s movement to be only directed to the good actions, which would lead to happiness and achieving benefits. Similarly, the word *An-Nuha* refers to the mind because it forbids the person from following the base desires which Allah *the Almighty* placed in the human being. They need a reasonable mind to constrain them and deal with them moderately. Otherwise, they will be harmful to the person. We should compare the human desire for food or sexual intercourse to that of the animal. The animal stops its desire at their due limits and never exceeds them. By contrast, the human being, who is endowed with the mind, unleashes his/her desires and transcends the prescribed limits.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* placed the mind in the human being to constrain him/her from following his/her desires, to prevent his/her from transgression in this regard and to elevate his/her desires to the level intended by his/her Creator. In this way, the mind is useful for implementing the legislations and the laws that Allah *the Almighty* imposes on the honoured human being. The instinct of loving food is prescribed to ensure the sustenance of life and the instinct of sexual intercourse is prescribed to ensure the sustenance of the species. Further, the instinct of curiosity makes the person search and investigate, and so on. If these instincts transcended their limits, they will be detrimental to the human being.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِعَادٍ ﴿٦﴾ إِرَمَ ذَاتِ الْعِمَادِ ﴿٧﴾ الَّتِي لَمْ يُخْلَقْ مِثْلُهَا فِي  
الْبِلَادِ ﴿٨﴾ وَثَمُودَ الَّذِينَ جَابُوا الصَّخْرَ بِالْوَادِ ﴿٩﴾ وَفِرْعَوْنَ ذِي الْأَوْنَادِ ﴿١٠﴾  
الَّذِينَ طَغَوْا فِي الْبِلَادِ ﴿١١﴾ فَأَكْثَرُوا فِيهَا الْفُسَادَ ﴿١٢﴾ فَصَبَّ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّكَ  
سَوْطَ عَذَابٍ ﴿١٣﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَبِالْمِرْصَادِ ﴿١٤﴾

**Have you [Prophet] considered how your Lord dealt with  
[the people] of 'Ad [6] of Iram, [the city] of lofty pillars [7]  
whose like has never been made in any land [8]  
and the Thamud, who hewed into the rocks in the valley [9]**



**and the mighty and powerful Pharaoh? [10] All of them  
committed excesses in their lands [11] and spread corruption  
there [12] your Lord let a scourge of punishment loose on  
them [13] Your Lord is always watchful [14]  
(The Quran, *al-Fajr*: 6 - 14)**

Here, Allah *the Almighty* relates to us a brief account of the previous nations that He seized with punishment and destruction. This is because He *the Almighty* has talked to us about the Overwhelming Event and its calamities that surround the people and encompass them that no one can find any way out. When will this Overwhelming Event take place? It will take place in the Hereafter. So, what about those who do not believe in it and consider it unlikely? Consequently, there should be a kind of hasty punishment in the worldly life before that of the Hereafter in order to deter such people. This guarantees that their tyranny will not prevail and their corruption will not spread among the people and will not overwhelm the countries. The verses in question mention some examples of the nations that He *the Almighty* punished in the worldly life, including ‘Ad, Thamud and Pharaoh.

Allah *the Almighty* addresses Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: ‘Have you [Prophet] considered how your Lord dealt with [the people] of ‘Ad.’ (*al-Fajr*: 6) The people of ‘Ad are figures with well-known history among the various civilizations. They had well-known architectural and civilizational achievements. However, this did not protect them from Allah’s Punishment. After He *the Almighty* seized them, they were totally destroyed and no trace was found for them. His saying: ‘Have you [Prophet] considered how your Lord dealt with [the people] of ‘Ad.’ (*al-Fajr*: 6) means that this news is already known to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and also those who were living at the time of revealing these verses. Their history was widespread among the travelers. That is why He *the Almighty* says: ‘Have you [Prophet] considered ...’ (*al-Fajr*: 6) If that news had been unknown to the people, they would have said that they did not know what happened to the people of ‘Ad. The destruction that afflicted the people of ‘Ad is well-known, and has really happened. The people can make sure of that through examining the remnants of these people. If we consider the punishment that befalls those

who violate Allah's Way of Guidance, we find it assuring the fact that we must believe in Allah's Promise and Threat. Thus, the one who violates Allah's Way of Guidance must suffer a worldly punishment before that of the Hereafter, so that the people do not think that the punishment will come only in the Hereafter. It is wise that the transgressors who violate Allah's Way of guidance should be punished in the worldly life and not be left until the Hereafter. They should be made an example for the people. So, the one, who does not believe in Allah's unseen Promise and Threat just because He told us about them, should believe in them on account of the factual reality that attests to him/her.

We have previously discussed the interpretation of His saying: 'Have you [Prophet] considered ...' (*al-Fajr*: 6). Scholars interpret it as, 'Have you not know?' If this were the case, why does He *the Almighty* say, '*Alam Tara* (Have you not seen)?' This is because He *the Almighty* wants to affirm this news to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and to direct our attention to the fact that when He *the Almighty* says something, we must be certain that it is totally true as if we had seen it with our eyes, not heard it with our ears. Moreover, what He *the Almighty* tells us is more truthful than what we see with our eyes because they can deceive us while He *the Almighty* never does so. Likewise, in every matter He *the Almighty* wants to confirm, He always says: 'Have you [Prophet] seen ...' (*al-Fajr*: 6), as in His saying: 'Do you not see that Allah is He, Whom obeys whoever is in the heavens and whoever is in the earth...' (*al-Hajj*: 18). We do not witness how these objects prostrate to Allah *the Almighty*, but His Report is more authentic than what our eyes perceive. So, what He *Glorified is He* tells us about the unseen matters should be elevated to the level of what the eye perceives, as it is the means of having certitude.

Here, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Have you [Prophet] considered how your Lord dealt with [the people] of 'Ad, [6] of Iram, [the city] of lofty pillars, [7] whose like has never been made in any land, [8]' (*al-Fajr*: 6-8) He *Glorified is He* gives us a picture of the level of civilisation, architecture and power that the people of 'Ad reached. They were unmatched among all the ancient nations. As for His saying: 'and the Thamud, who hewed into the rocks in the valley.' (*al-Fajr*: 9), it means that they, i.e. the people of Thamud cut the rocks and

hewed into them, making houses and palaces inside the mountains. We have already seen this description in the city of Petra in Jordan. It is an example of the architectural advancement that today's modern science and new machines failed to match. Then He *the Almighty* says: 'and the mighty and powerful Pharaoh? [10] All of them committed excesses in their lands. [11]' (*al-Fajr*: 10-11)

Here, Allah *the Almighty* mentions the flaws of those nations. He *Glorified is He* does not condemn them for their construction, building and unmatched civilization but rather for their transgression and haughtiness on account of their material advancement. Further, He *the Almighty* does not condemn them for the material advancement or activity in life, but rather for their transgression in their activities. The human being is free to pursue the means of advancement and development and to find out the secrets of existence that bring about luxury, blessings and prosperity within the limits of what Allah *the Almighty* made lawful. However, one should beware of transgression in the blessings, the high rank, the property, etc. This is because transgression inevitably leads to corruption: 'All of them committed excesses in their lands, [11] and spread corruption there: [12]' (*al-Fajr*: 11-12) As Allah *the Almighty* is displeased with corruption, He *Glorified is He* must put an end to it so that it does not spread in the universe. Consequently, He *Glorified is He* seizes the transgressors with Power and Might.

So, He *the Almighty* says: 'your Lord let a scourge of punishment loose on them. [13] Your Lord is always watchful. [14]' (*al-Fajr*: 13-14) This means that He *Glorified is He* watches over their actions and will hold them accountable for them. This is because He *the Almighty* is fully Aware of everything and nothing is hidden from Him; not absent from Him is an atom's weight within the heavens or within the earth. Here, we notice that the Quran presents the following meaning plainly: 'All of them committed excesses in their lands, [11] and spread corruption there: [12]' (*al-Fajr*: 11-12). It makes a connection between corruption and transgression. The word 'transgression' means to exceed the reasonable limits. All the matters have a due measure, and when there is excessiveness in these measures, transgression takes place, as the people would consequently dispute over their rights. Thus, excessiveness in one party necessitates decrease in the other. There is no wrongdoer without a wronged

one, nor is there a haughty person without a humiliated one. Transgression entails that the person wants to use his/her privileges wrongly. Naturally, there are strong people and weak ones. According to the Islamic Way of Guidance, the strong, the rich and the knowledgeable must help the weak, the poor and the ignorant, respectively. Thus, the privileged person should not deprive the unprivileged one of the bounties that He *the Almighty* bestowed on him/her. The opposite, wrong way is that the privileged one appropriates the unprivileged person's labour, so that the strong grow in power and the weak grow in weakness; the rich grow in wealth and the poor in poverty. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...so those who are made to excel do not give away their sustenance to those whom their right hands possess so that they should be equal therein...' (*an-Nahl*: 71).

In fact, transgression is a compound form of corruption. This is because if the weak were left without help, this would be considered transgression and injustice. So, what would we think if the transgressors use the weak person's labour to grow in power?! So, when transgression prevails, Allah *the Almighty* intervenes to stop it. On the individual level, He *the Almighty* is Patient with His servants as long as they have the self-reproaching soul and the self-deterrent against corruption and misdeeds. Further, He *Glorified is He* is Patient with the society as long as it automatically reforms its members through enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. So, when there is no deterrent on the individual and the social level, what should we do? Shall we leave transgression and corruption to prevail? No, Allah *the Almighty* must intervene with a deterring punishment, as the transgressors are devoid of any deterrent. This is what happened with the nations that He *the Almighty* annihilated and seized with Might and Power through the flood that drowned them, the Blast that destructed them or the stones that fell on them from the sky like rain.

We notice in the Messages before Islam that the Messenger was responsible for calling his people to faith but he is not responsible for punishing those who oppose his Message, for Allah *the Almighty* takes upon Himself to punish them. This was the Divine Law in all the previous Messages from the time of Adam. It is only changed after the coming of the Message of Islam. This is because He *the Almighty* sent Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

as the last Prophet to overwhelm all the religions. He *peace and blessings be upon him* entrusted his followers to reform those who violate Allah's Way of Guidance on earth. Consequently, striving in the cause of Allah *the Almighty* is an obligation and a special characteristic of Muslims that never ceases to exist. That is why one of the privileges of this *ummah* is the existence of good people who reform the deviant people at all times. In this regard, he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'A group among my *ummah* will continue to follow the truth and prevail, and those who oppose them will not be able to harm them, until the Hour is established.' Messenger Muhammad's followers are extension for His Message and are entrusted with the Call after him. They are required to take up the banner of striving in the cause of Allah *the Almighty* and to reform those who deviate from the Divine Way of Guidance. This striving should be in the cause of Allah *the Almighty* to make His Word uppermost, without committing any act of injustice or transgression. For this reason, we find that He *the Almighty* charged this *ummah* with what He had charged Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: 'And thus We have made you a medium (just) nation that you may be the bearers of witness to the people and (that) the Apostle may be a bearer of witness to you...' (*al-Baqara*: 143). As he *peace and blessings be upon him* bears witness that he delivers the Message to us and guides us to the Right Path, those who believe in him are required to bear witness that they have delivered the Way of Guidance to the people and made them abide by it.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Your Lord is always watchful.' (*al-Fajr*: 14), it means that He *the Almighty* knows fully well all the peoples' movements and watches over them. Consequently, He will not let them violate His Way of Guidance. All their movements are reckoned and He *the Almighty* will punish them in the worldly life, if He wills, or defer the punishment until the Hereafter. The people of 'Ad lived in Al-Ahqaf, as He *the Almighty* says: 'And mention the brother of 'Ad; when he warned his people in the sandy plains...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 21) The Messenger sent to them was Hud *peace be upon him*. Al-Ahqaf is located in the south of the Arabian Peninsula between Aden and Hadramaut. Their civilization has been destructed totally, so we have not seen any of its remnants. Scholars opine that this is because it is a sandy area where sand storms can cover a complete caravan. That is why there is no trace

of them. As for Thamud, they are the people of Prophet Saleh and their remnants are still existent. Likewise, the powerful Pharaoh's traces are still apparent in the Pyramids, the temples and so on. As the Quran tells us about Iram, the city of lofty pillars, this clearly means that it already existed in such an unmatched description. The Quran addresses those who witnessed its revelation according to the knowledge they had about the civilization of 'Ad. In fact, the utter truthfulness of the Quran in telling about things we have witnessed is a conclusive proof of its utter truthfulness in telling about what we have not seen.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* corrects the wrong scale that the people use when they receive His commands concerning the creatures. He *the Almighty* says to them, 'You are wrongly measuring the matters and I want to put your scale right in order that your activity in life be upon guidance. This is because the wrong scale leads to turmoil and confusion in people's activity in life.'

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

فَأَمَّا الْإِنْسَانُ إِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَأَكْرَمَهُ، وَنَعَّمَهُ، فَيَقُولُ رَبِّي أَكْرَمَنِ ﴿١٥﴾  
 وَأَمَّا إِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ فَقَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقَهُ، فَيَقُولُ رَبِّي أَهْنَنِ ﴿١٦﴾ أَكَلَّا بَلْ لَا تُكْرَمُونَ  
 الْيَتِيمَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَا تَحْضُونَ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمَسْكِينِ ﴿١٨﴾ وَتَأْكُلُونَ التَّرَاثَ  
 أَكَلًا لَمًّا ﴿١٩﴾ وَتُحِبُّونَ أَمْوَالَ حُبًّا جَمًّا ﴿٢٠﴾

**[The nature of] man is that, when his Lord tries him through honour and blessings, he says, 'My Lord has honoured me' [15] but when He tries him through the restriction of his provision, he says, 'My Lord has humiliated me' [16] No indeed! You [people] do not honour orphans [17] you do not urge one another to feed the poor [18] you consume inheritance greedily [19] and you love wealth with a passion [20] (The Quran, *al-Fajr*: 15 - 20)**

Here, Allah *the Almighty* mentions two cases in life: the person whom He *Glorified is He* has provided abundantly, and thus s/he thinks this is good to him/her, saying, 'My Lord has honoured me.' The second case is of the one whom Allah *the Almighty* restricted his/her provision, for s/he consequently

thinks this is evil for him/her, saying thereby, 'My Lord has humiliated me.' He *Glorified is He* therefore corrects these misconceptions, saying, 'Giving abundant provision or increasing the wealth of someone is not a proof of honouring, nor is restricting the provision is a proof of humiliating. This wrong thought brings about confusion between the test and the result.' They are indeed different, for giving wealth and providing abundantly constitute a test. This is also the case with restricting the provision and having little money. Both of these cases are equal to each other, for they both are none but mere tests; no one excels the other except after finding out the result of the exam of each one. In other words, being honoured or humiliated is up to the person and depends on his/her success in the test. When we reflect on the Quranic manner of expression, we find that both cases are none but a test; He *the Almighty* tests His servant by either the abundant provision and wealth or the restriction of the provision and having little money. Further, He *Glorified is He* corrects the misconception of both parties. His saying: 'No indeed!' (*al-Fajr*: 16) means that the understanding of both parties are wrong, for neither the abundant provision is a sign of honour nor the restricted one is a sign of humiliation.

Afterwards, the context proves the truthfulness of this Divine Rule through mentioning some ways of spending, saying: 'You [people] do not honour orphans, [17] you do not urge one another to feed the poor [18]' (*al-Fajr*: 17-18). In fact, money has two sides in our life, namely: - how it is gained and how it is spent. Here, we find that the Quranic context skips talking about the way of gaining money to talk about the way of spending it because it is more important in this particular context. It is as if He *the Almighty* addresses the one who wrongly thinks that having an abundant wealth is a sign of honour, saying, 'Have you fulfilled the due right in your wealth? Have you honoured the orphans and fed the poor?' He *the Almighty* mentions two cases of misery and hardship that the rich people are required to eliminate. It is as if He *Glorified is He* says to the servant, 'How can the wealth you have be a sign of honour while you have not rightly spent it? In reality, it is not a sign of honour but rather a test for you. The real honour is to pass the test through spending on the orphans and the poor.'

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* mentions another defect of wealth, saying: 'you consume inheritance greedily.' (*al-Fajr*: 19) Consuming inheritance is a

prevailing defect in our societies. How can we say that the wealth of person who collected money from consuming inheritance is a sign of honour?! On the contrary, it is a test and a proof of humiliation because s/he collected it unlawfully from ill-gotten sources. We cannot expect that such a person will spend his/her money in a lawful way.

As for the one who was deprived of money and thought that Allah *the Almighty* had humiliated him/her, s/he should consider the situation of the one who collected his/her money unlawfully and thus bore its consequences. S/he should carefully read Allah's saying: '...they shall have that whereof they were niggardly made to cleave to their necks on the Resurrection Day...' (*Al-'Imran*: 180); and 'On the day when it shall be heated in the fire of hell, then their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded with it; this is what you hoarded up for yourselves, therefore taste what you hoarded.' (*at-Tawba*: 35)

In this case, the one who was deprived of money is better than the one who failed the exam of gaining and spending it lawfully. He *the Almighty* does not deprive the person of money to humiliate him/her, for this deprivation in itself could be an honour and Mercy. Man should only reflect on the cases of the rich people around him/her. S/he will find that many of them failed in the test of having wealth; they neither gained nor spent it lawfully. This definitively proves the truthfulness of what Allah *the Almighty* says. We should only correct our viewpoint about wealth on the basis of what He *the Almighty* told us, so that our activity in life would be based on guidance. Furthermore, this makes us respect Allah's Predestination and Distribution of His Bestowals among His creatures.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'and you love wealth with a passion.' (*al-Fajr*: 20) Our passionate love for wealth is a factual reality, for this love is instilled in the human being; it even constitutes part of his/her natural instinct. That is why we find that wealth is the main interest of the people and the criterion for comparison. They say, 'This is rich and that is poor,' but they rarely think about other blessings. In fact, morals, obedience, happiness, good health, safety and children are all blessings among many others. So, we should not concentrate on the blessing of wealth and neglect other blessings.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:



كَلَّا إِذَا دُكَّتِ الْأَرْضُ دَكًّا دَكًّا ۚ وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا ۚ  
وَجِئَاءَ يَوْمَيْهِمْ بِجَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَنْذَعُ الْأَنْسُنُ وَأَنَّى لَهُ الذِّكْرَى ۚ

**No indeed! When the earth is pounded to dust, pounded and pounded [21] when your Lord comes with the angels, rank upon rank [22] when Hell is that Day brought near – on that Day man will take heed, but what good will that be to him then? [23] (The Quran, *al-Fajr*: 21- 23)**

The Arabic word *Dakka* means to pound something to be flat like something lower than it. This meaning is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...then will you see Me; but when his Lord manifested His Glory to the mountain He made it crumble...’ (*al-A‘raf*: 143). The mountain is supposed to be firm, strong and stable. If it should remain in place, then Moses would see Allah *the Almighty*. However, when He *Glorified is He* manifested His Glory to it, He made it crumble and Moses *Allah’s peace be upon him* fell unconscious. So, the meaning of His saying: ‘When the earth is pounded to dust, pounded and pounded.’ (*al-Fajr*: 21) is that the earth will totally break up and turn to dust. Likewise, He *the Almighty* says: ‘...but when the promise of my Lord comes to pass He will make it level with the ground, and the promise of my Lord is ever true.’ (*al-Kahf*: 98) So, when Allah’s Promise about the Hereafter and the Resurrection comes to pass, He *the Almighty* will level the barrier of Dhu Al-Qarnayn with the ground. The word ‘*Dakka*’ serves as an emphasis on the same word mentioned before it. It confirms the action of pounding the earth and indicates the power of pounding and breaking it up.

As for Allah’s saying: ‘when your Lord comes with the angels, rank upon rank.’ (*al-Fajr*: 22), it means that the Angels will stand in ordered rows, behind each other. This sight is beyond the human perception. The coming of Allah *the Almighty* should be considered in the light of His saying: ‘...nothing is like Him...’ (*ash-Shura*: 11). It is not similar to the coming of the human beings and the other creatures. Further, His Hearing and Life are different from His creatures’ hearing and life. This is due to the fact that His Attributes and Actions are not similar to that of the created beings. We should not only

negate the similarity between His Essence and that of the people but also negate this similarity in the Attributes and Actions. If the act of coming in our human perception entails leaving a place to go to another, then this coming could not be attributed to Him *the Almighty*. He *the Almighty* is Present somewhere but not absent from anywhere. This is the manifestation of His Glory and Greatness.

He *Glorified is He* then says: 'When hell is that Day brought near– on that Day man will take heed, but what good will that be to him then?' (*al-Fajr*: 23) The hell will be brought near on the Day of Judgment, being dragged by seventy thousand bridles. Seventy thousand Angels are in charge of pulling every bridle. They drag the hell until it stands on the left side of the Throne. When this verse was revealed, the colour of Messenger Muhammad's face changed and he heavily sweated that the Companions felt sorrow for him. Some of them went to 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* and said, 'O 'Ali, something serious had happened and we realised its effect on the Prophet of Allah.' 'Ali went to him, embraced him from behind and kissed him between his eyes. He then said, 'O Prophet of Allah, may my father and mother be sacrificed for you! What has happened today? What has changed your condition? He *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Gabriel has come and recited this verse to me: 'When hell is that Day brought near...' (*al-Fajr*: 23). I asked him how it would be drawn near. He said, 'Seventy thousand Angels will drag it by seventy thousand bridles. It will deviate for a moment and if it would not be controlled, it would have burnt all the gathered people.'

Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...on that Day man will take heed, but what good will that be to him then?' (*al-Fajr*: 23) At that time, man will fully realize the truth and take heed of what s/he sees – but it is too late. That is why He *the Almighty* says afterwards: 'but what good will that be to him then?' (*al-Fajr*: 23) The time of taking heed has gone and it is useless in the Hereafter, the Home of Recompense. At that time, man will remember what s/he had done or left undone. S/he will fully realize that s/he will be held accountable for the rights s/he has unlawfully consumed, the money s/he has hoarded and the food of which he has deprived the poor and the orphans. However, what is the benefit of that realization at that time? What is the fruit of repentance after it is too late?

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

يَقُولُ يَلَيْتَنِي قَدَّمْتُ لِحَيَاتِي ﴿٢٤﴾

**He will say, ‘Would that I had provided for this life to come!’ [24] (The Quran, *al-Fajr*: 24)**

Such a person wishes that s/he had provided anything for the Hereafter, which is the real life. He wishes that s/he had put forward good deeds and righteous actions and that s/he had strived in his/her fleeting life for the everlasting one. The Arabic particle ‘*Layt*’ denotes wishing for something beloved yet unattainable. S/he describes his/her eager wish through calling it, but it would never answer. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And this life of the world is nothing but a sport and a play; and as for the next abode, that most surely is the life-- did they but know!’ (*al-Ankabut*: 64) The Hereafter is the one that deserves to be described as ‘a life’ because it is eternal and everlasting. By contrast, the worldly life is a transitory one and we should work in it for the sake of the Hereafter.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَا يُعَذِّبُ عَذَابُهُ أَحَدٌ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَلَا يُوثِقُ وَثَاقُهُ أَحَدٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

**On that Day, no one will punish as He punishes [25]  
and no one will bind as He binds [26]  
(The Quran, *al-Fajr*: 25 - 26)**

On the Day of Judgment, no one of the created beings will afflict the punishment of Allah *the Almighty* as He *Glorified is He* is the Only One Who is entitled to do so. Likewise, in the worldly life, no one should punish with His *Glorified is He* punishment. The ‘bind’ is what is used to tie someone up. As no one will punish as Allah *the Almighty* punishes, no one will bind as He binds. On that Day, the people will not witness a punishment more severe than that befalling the wrongdoers. Further, they will not see the like of the tight bond with which He *the Almighty* bonds them. Consequently, the people of error will find no way out to escape.

Allah *the Almighty* concludes the chapter of *al-Fajr* with talking about the peaceful soul in order to reassure the believers, saying:

يَأْتِيهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ﴿٢٧﴾ أَرْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً ﴿٢٨﴾  
فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي ﴿٢٩﴾ وَادْخُلِي جَنَّاتِي ﴿٣٠﴾

**‘[But] you, soul at peace [27] return to your Lord well pleased and well pleasing [28] go in among My servants [29] and into My Garden’ [30] (The Quran, *al-Fajr*: 27 - 30)**

The peaceful soul is the one that finds assurance and peace in Allah’s Way of Guidance. If this soul exists along with the self-reproaching soul in a society, then it will be a good, peaceful one. This is because the peaceful one commands the person to do acts of obedience while the self-reproaching one rebukes him/her for committing sins and evil deeds. The peaceful soul is excessively content to the extent that this contentment extends to the life it leads. It is as if that life loves and is content with the one with the peaceful soul. This soul is not anxious either in the good or the bad times; it is always content with Allah’s Predestination. At the time of easiness, it is thankful to Allah *the Almighty* and at the time of distress, it is patient and content. Affluence does not incite it to act haughtily or violate the Straight Path, nor does poverty make it discontent. The peaceful soul is the one which is sure it will not be punished. It will return to its Lord’s Benevolence and Reward that He has prepared for it.

So, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Go in among My servants; [29] and into My Garden. [30]’ (*al-Fajr*: 29-30) It will go among the righteous servants. In this regard, ‘Amr ibn Al-‘As says, ‘When a believer dies, two Angels will be sent to him/her with a curio from the paradise, and will say to him/her, ‘Come out, O peaceful soul as well pleased and well pleasing. Come out praiseworthy and receive glad tidings of mercy and fragrance and a Lord Who is not angry. It will then come out as the best fragrance of musk on the surface of the earth.’ So, the peaceful soul is tranquil; it is not provoked by fear or sadness. It is peaceful through remembering, obeying, and fearing Allah *the Almighty*. It will return to its Lord to receive its promised reward. As it will be pleased with what it is given, He *the Almighty* is pleased with it. It will be among the righteous servants who no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve. It will enter Allah’s Paradise that He prepared for the righteous servants. In that paradise there are bounties that no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard and no human heart has ever perceived.

the chapter of

***al-Balad***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Balad*<sup>(1)</sup> (The City)

لَا أُقْسِمُ بِهَذَا الْبَلَدِ ۝ وَأَنْتَ حِلُّ بِهَذَا الْبَلَدِ ۝ وَوَالِدٍ وَمَا وَلَدَ ۝

**I swear by this city —[1] and you [Prophet] are an  
inhabitant of this city —[2] [I swear] by parent and  
offspring [3] (The Quran, *al-Balad*: 1- 3)**

The Oath is employed to affirm the meaning. In this connection, one of the righteous people said, ‘Who have invoked Allah’s Wrath to the extent that He takes an Oath.’ He *the Almighty* may swear by Himself or one of His creatures. Further, He may employ a negated Oath, as in His saying: ‘I swear by this city.’ (*al-Balad*: 1); and ‘But nay! I swear by the falling of stars; [75] and most surely it is a very great oath if you only knew; [76]’ (*al-Waqi’a*: 75-76). Therefore, He *Glorified is He* swears by Himself to affirm the subject of the Oath. In the judiciary field, affirming a subject could be through an oath. If someone takes an oath, no one can belie him/her. Further, He *the Almighty* swears by the fig, the olives, the Wise Quran and so on.

Here, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘I swear by this city —[1] and you [Prophet] are an inhabitant of this city—[2] [I swear] by parent and offspring. [3]

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(1) The chapter of *Al-Balad*, counting 20 verses and 82 words, is number 90 in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *Qaf* and before that of *At-Tariq*. So, it is number 35 in the order of the revelation. It is called *Al-Balad* because this word is mentioned in the first verse; and also *Al-Aqaba* because this word is mentioned in His saying: ‘Yet he has not attempted the steep path.’ (*al-Balad*: 11)

(*al-Balad*: 1-3) Amazingly, the subject of the Oath is mentioned: 'that We have created man for toil and trial.' (*al-Balad*: 4) One may ask, 'How does He *the Almighty* negate the fact that He is taking Oaths here and then mentions a subject for these Oaths?' We say that this indicates that the people should not have denied the subject of the Oaths, and He should not have taken Oaths to affirm it. However, if He were to swear, He would swear by the aforementioned Oaths.

Mecca has become a city by Prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham) invocation. Mecca and the area surrounding it were an abandoned, barren place, bereft of plants, water and people. This is how Prophet Ibrahim described it, saying: 'O our Lord! Surely I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley unproductive of fruit near Your Sacred House...' (*Ibrahim*: 37). It was an uncultivable land. No human being could plant it. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And when Abraham said: My Lord, make it a secure town and provide its people with fruits...' (*al-Baqara*: 136) He *peace be upon him* asked to make that place a city and to make it secure. The word *Balad* refers to the city. When there is a place with no building, it cannot be easily distinguished. However, when the buildings are constructed in it, they will make it distinguished from the surrounding flat earth. The Quran uses some terms to describe places like village, country and city. *Al-Balad* refers to the big city that has all man's needs that s/he does not find in other cities. Ibrahim's invocation was: '...therefore make the hearts of some people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits; haply they may be grateful.' (*Ibrahim*: 37) The people loved to come to Mecca with all kinds of provisions and fruits. They came to the city that had no fruits to be considered a big city; however, it became a big, secure city.

So, Allah's Oath: 'I swear by this.' [3] (*al-Balad*: 1) reminds the people of Mecca about the condition of their city when Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* came to it with his wife, Hajar, and baby Ismail (Ishmael). At that time, Mecca was not a city, or even anything. So, Allah *the Almighty* reminds the people of Mecca about His Blessings on them, while they deny and disbelieve in the Message and bar from the Way of Allah *the Almighty*. If they did not believe in Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* out of



fear of losing their power and prestigious rank, they should remember that their Lord had given a great position for their city after being a barren desert.

Then He *the Almighty* says: ‘and you [Prophet] are an inhabitant of this city.’ (*al-Balad*: 2) This means that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* lives in that city. Some scholars say that the Arabic word *Hill* could mean ‘lawful’. So, the meaning would be that it is lawful to him *peace and blessings be upon him* to fight in that city, while this was declared unlawful before him. In this regard, he *peace and blessings be upon him* says, ‘Fighting in Mecca is unlawful. It was made sacred by Allah the day He created the heavens and the Earth. Fighting therein was not permitted for any one before me or after me rather it was permitted for me for a short part of a day.’ Other scholars hold the position that the word *Hill* means that he *peace and blessings be upon him* stays in Mecca. This is an addition to the inviolability and the honour of Mecca. Those who hold the first view say that this chapter was revealed in Medina after the year of Opening Mecca. Those who opt for the second one say that it was revealed in Mecca.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘[I swear] by parent and offspring. (*al-Balad*: 3), it refers to Adam *peace be upon him* and his offspring until the coming of the Hour. This means that He *Glorified is He* swears by the human beings from the time of Adam to the coming of the Hour. Some scholars, however, opine that the particle *Ma* is a negative one here. So, the meaning is that He *Glorified is He* also swears by the sterile person who does not have children. Now, why does He *the Almighty* swear by Adam and his offspring after swearing by Mecca which had become a city due to Ibrahim’s (Abraham) invocation?! This city has become the Mother of the cities because it has been inhabited by many people and offspring. It is as if He *the Almighty* shows His Favour on the people of Mecca, telling them that their city has become so due to His *Glorified is He* Blessings on them.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي كَبَدٍ ﴿٤﴾ أَيْحَسِبُ أَنْ لَنْ يَقْدَرَ عَلَيْهِ أَحَدٌ ﴿٥﴾  
 يَقُولُ أَهْلَكْتُ مَالًا لُبَدًا ﴿٦﴾ أَيْحَسِبُ أَنْ لَمْ يَرَهُ أَحَدٌ ﴿٧﴾

**That We have created man for toil and trial [4] Does he think that no one will have power over him? [5] 'I have squandered great wealth,' he says [6] Does he think no one observes him? [7] (The Quran, *al-Balad*: 4 - 7)**

Allah *the Almighty* tells us in many verses about the human being. Some verses talk about his/her material creation, like His saying: 'And certainly did We create man from an extract of clay.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 12); 'And We did certainly create man out of clay from an altered black mud.' (*al-Hijr*: 26); and 'We create man in the finest state.' (*at-Tin*: 4) Here, He *the Almighty* says: 'that We have created man for toil and trial.' (*al-Balad*: 4) This verse refers to the creation of man as to his/her mission on the earth. S/he faces the calamities of the worldly life and the hardships of the Hereafter. S/he is always at difficult times. The worldly life is the home of hardship, toil and distress, while the paradise is the home of everlasting rest and blessings.

Some scholars maintain that the word *Kabad* means that Allah *the Almighty* created the human being in an upright state. Most of what He *the Almighty* has created walks on four feet or on its belly, etc. By contrast, the human being walks upright on two feet. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'And Allah has created from water every living creature: so of them is that which walks upon its belly, and of them is that which walks upon two feet, and of them is that which walks upon four; Allah creates what He pleases; surely Allah has power over all things.' (*an-Nur*: 45) The Arabic word *Daab-ba* refers to anything walking on the earth. Some creatures walk on their bellies like the creeping creatures; some on two feet like the gorilla and the kangaroo; others on four feet like most of the animals and the cattle. These are just examples of how some creatures walk, for some other creatures walk on forty-four feet. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: '...He creates what you do not know.' (*an-Nahl*: 8) Man is the only creature that originally walks upright on two feet. As for the animals that walk on two feet, they do not remain as such for a long time, as they return to their normal state, waking on four feet.

Now, does man think that no one has power over him/her after Allah *the Almighty* has created him/her in that way, honored him/her and perfected his/her creation to be the best among the creatures?! So, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Does he think that no one will have power over him?’ (*al-Balad*: 5) The problem with man is that s/he does not know his/her true position and thus have many delusions, including that no one has power over him/her and that his/her property is enough to save him/her despite his/her transgression and injustice. S/he wrongly thinks that no one will overcome him/her, for s/he is deceived by his/her power, boasting about his/her high position and rank, allured and proud of his/herself. Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘I have squandered great wealth,’ he says.’ (*al-Balad*: 6) The property signifies any valuable thing and it is not confined to money. Rather, everything that the person has and can be measured by money is called a ‘property’. Thus, the land, the estate, the cattle, the gardens and the palm trees are all considered a property. The Arabic expression ‘*Al-Mal Al-lubad*’ refers to the great, accumulated amount of money, which denotes its abundance. There are many narrations regarding the reason for the revelation of this verse, including that it is revealed in reference to Abu Jahl, Al-Hakam ibn Hisham, or Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira. Such people spend a lot of money on their enmity for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*. They allotted money for those who kill him and spent money on the battle of Badr, Uhud and Al-Khandaq. So, did what they spent benefit them? In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Surely those who disbelieve spend their wealth to hinder (people) from the way of Allah; so they shall spend it, then it shall be to them an intense regret, then they shall be overcome; and those who disbelieve shall be driven together to hell.’ (*al-Anfal*: 36) Such people disbelieved in Allah *the Almighty* and spent their money to bar from His Way. However, they did not achieve their purpose and their endeavour was fruitless. It is as if He *the Almighty* encourages the disbelievers to keep on spending money against the Islamic Faith so that they lose all of it. Consequently, they will grieve for that loss and regret spending it. Ultimately, they will be overcome by Allah *the Almighty*.

He *Glorified is He* then says: ‘Does he think no one observes him?’ (*al-Balad*: 70) Does this person who is deceived by his/her power and property think that no

one observes him/her when s/he bars from the Way of Allah *the Almighty* through his/her high position, power, authority, property and family bonds? Does s/he think that Allah *the Almighty* does not see his/her actions, observe his/her misdeeds and watch him/her while spending money to bar from His Way and fight the people of faith?

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* mentions some of His Blessings, saying:

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ عَيْنَيْنِ ۝ ٨ وَلِسَانًا وَشَفَتَيْنِ ۝ ٩ وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ ۝ ١٠

**Did We not give him eyes [8] a tongue, lips [9]  
and point out to him the two clear ways [of good and evil]? [10]  
(The Quran, *al-Balad*: 8 - 10)**

These verses include some of the apparent Blessings that man cannot deny. He *the Almighty* mentions the eyes which refer to the sense of sight and the tongue and the lips which are essential for the sense of speaking. He *Glorified is He* made the human being able to see and speak. Here, the sense of hearing is not mentioned despite the fact that it is mentioned many times along with that of sight. However, the context here mentions the sense of speaking because such man said: 'I have squandered great wealth.' (*al-Balad*: 6) How does He *the Almighty* give him/her a tongue and lips and then s/he utters such words?!

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'and point out to him the two clear ways [of good and evil]?' (*al-Balad*: 10) When, He *the Almighty* created man, He showed him/her the Way of Guidance, which is the general direction (guidance) to all people. The Arabic word *Najd* refers to the way going upward. It also refers to the high spots on the earth. In this connection, Al-Hassan Al-Basri narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'There are two ways; so why do you prefer the evil one to the good one?' So, the meaning of the verse is that He *Glorified is He* showed man the good way to follow and the evil one to refrain from.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* mentions some of His Blessings:

فَلَا أَقْنَحِمِ الْعَقَبَةَ ﴿١١﴾ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْعَقَبَةُ ﴿١٢﴾ فَكُ رَقَبَةً ﴿١٣﴾ أَوْ إِطْعَمٌ فِي يَوْمٍ  
ذِي مَسْغَبَةٍ ﴿١٤﴾ يَتِيمًا ذَا مَقْرَبَةٍ ﴿١٥﴾ أَوْ مَسْكِينًا ذَا مَتْرَبَةٍ ﴿١٦﴾

**Yet he has not attempted the steep path [11] What will explain  
to you what the steep path is? [12] It is to free a slave [13]  
to feed at a time of hunger [14] an orphaned relative [15]  
or a poor person in distress [16]  
(The Quran, *al-Balad*: 11 - 16)**

Linguistically, the Arabic word *Raqaba* refers to the origin of the neck. It also refers to the human being because man's life can be controlled by holding his/her neck. This can lead to his/her death if one presses tightly on the neck. That is why the word *Raqaba* refers to the whole human being. In this regard, the Quran says: 'What will explain to you what the steep path is? [12] It is to free a slave. [13]' (*al-Balad*: 12-13) Here, that word refers to releasing the captured people and the slaves. The good people can buy the slaves and then free them or even participate in this good deed. This was a way of ending slavery. In this process, there were two ways of freeing the slave, which are emancipation and contracting. The first case is when the master of a loyal slave – who served him for a long time - decides to free him after his death. Here, the emancipation is conditional on the death of the master. After he dies, the slave becomes free, not owned by the heirs. The second way is that the master concludes a contract with the slave to free him after paying 100 pounds, for example. The slave can freely seek his provision and pursue the means to gain the required sum of money. After giving it to the master, he becomes free. In the latter case, the good people should help the slave to get the sum of money which he needs to free himself.

In fact, Islam prescribes many ways for freeing slaves by making it, for example, expiation for great sins that can only be forgiven through freeing a slave. Moreover, it prescribes a great reward for the one who frees a slave for the sake of Allah *the Almighty*. Further, freeing slaves and captives is one of the eight ways of spending the *zakat*. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Alms are only for the poor and the needy, and the officials (appointed) over them, and those whose hearts are made to incline (to truth) and the (ransoming of)



captives and those in debts and in the way of Allah and the wayfarer; an ordinance from Allah; and Allah is knowing, Wise.' (*at-Tawba*: 60) In this connection, we should state that Islam did initiate, impose or encourage slavery. In fact, it came while slavery was widespread and slaves were having no rights at all. It came to gradually end slavery and abolish the bondage through eliminating its sources. Thus, it has made freeing slave expiation for some sins and one of the ways of spending the *zakat*. This is due to the fact that the sources of slavery were various and bondage was prevailing in the world. So, Islam has not depended on the master's wish to free the slave; rather, it prescribes many ways for freeing them. For example, some sins are only forgiven by freeing a slave. Further, the one who takes an oath and wants to break it should free a slave. Besides, if the person wants to increase his/her reward, s/he can voluntarily free a slave.

Freeing slaves is described as the 'steep path' that the human being should attempt. The sins of the person are like mountains and if s/he frees a slave, they will thus melt and go away. The one who commits sins and seeks Allah's Forgiveness and frees a slave will have his/her sins wiped out. Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'What will explain to you what the steep path is?' (*al-Balad*: 12) This verse magnifies the rank, the seriousness and the position of the freeing slaves. One can attempt the steep path with his/her sins which are like the mountain by freeing a slave. In other words, s/he can have all of these sins forgiven by freeing a slave.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'It is to free a slave, [13] to feed at a time of hunger [14] an orphaned relative [15] or a poor person in distress. [16]' (*al-Balad*: 13-16) These verses mean that the person can attempt the steep path by also feeding a needy person at time of hunger, an orphaned relative or a poor person who is in a dire need. If the person has no orphaned relative, s/he should feed an orphan who is not a relative. Some people commit many sins that became like a steep path that may deprive them of paradise. For such people, Allah *the Almighty* opens the way of salvation and goodness through freeing a captured person or a slave; alleviating a wronged person; feeding the people at time of famine when there is a dire need for food; or feeding one's orphaned relative or distressed poor person. It is as if He *the Almighty* wants the

person to do an effective work in his/her society to attempt the steep path of sins and to take all the good paths.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:


 تُعَايَنَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصِّدْقِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْمَرْحَمَةِ  

 أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ

**And to be one of those who believe and urge one another to steadfastness and compassion [17] Those who do this will be on the right-hand side [18] (The Quran, *al-Balad*: 17 - 18)**

Allah *the Almighty* wants the person who takes all the good ways to attempt the steep path that blocks his/her way to the paradise to do more than that. S/he should elevate his/herself in the levels of Faith and be a better Muslim. S/he is required to join those who believe and who are the majority of the society. S/he should be part of the Muslim society who believes in Allah *the Almighty* and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This society has distinctive features, which are: ‘...urge one another to steadfastness and compassion.’ (*al-Balad*: 17) Similarly, in the chapter of *Al-‘Asr*, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘By the declining day, [1] man is [deep] in loss, [2] except for those who believe, do good deeds, urge one another to the truth, and urge one another to steadfastness. [3]’ (*al-‘Asr*: 1-3) The way to be exempted from the deep loss is to believe, do good deeds, urge the people to the truth and steadfastness. In the chapter in question, He *the Almighty* adds: ‘...urge one another to...compassion.’ (*al-Balad*: 17)

The Arabic word ‘*At-Tawasi*’ means to urge someone at one time and to be urged at another. When the one is strong, s/he should urge the weak and vice versa. The chapter of *Al-‘Asr* urges to truth and steadfastness. We only urge each other to steadfastness only after urging to truth that we all accept. Afterwards, we urge each other to be steadfast in following the truth, its hardships and difficulties. Here, in the chapter of *Al-Balad*, there is urging to steadfastness and then to compassion. It is as if the chapter of *Al-Balad* completes that of *Al-‘Asr*. If we are following the truth, we should urge each other to be steadfast in following it, because steadfastness is a difficult matter

and is related to hardships. Following the truth is burdensome and we may differ about it, so we need for what is more than urging each other to truth and steadfastness, which is, the compassion.

This means to have compassion among ourselves and to show it to the people. In this regard, it is reported that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Allah will show mercy to a person who shows mercy to other people.' He also said, 'Mercy is only removed from the one who is destined for wretchedness.' This compassion towards the people entails satisfying their needs, educating the ignorant and helping them to fulfil all their mundane and religious interest. 'Urging for compassion' means to spread its spirit in the society, to be merciful to each other, especially when we differ, to wish for goodness for each other and not to forget the graciousness between ourselves.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Those who do this will be on the right-hand side.' (*al-Balad*: 18), there is a difference between the people on the right-hand side and the Forerunners, as He *the Almighty* says in the chapter of *Al-Waqi'a*: 'And the forerunners, the forerunners – [10] Those are the ones brought near [to Allah] [11] In the Gardens of Pleasure, [12]' (*al-Waqi'a*: 10-12) Afterwards, He *Glorified is He* defines them, saying: 'A [large] company of the former peoples [13] And a few of the later peoples. [14]' (*al-Waqi'a*: 13-15) As for the rank of the people on the right-hand side, He *the Almighty* says: 'The companions of the right - what are the companions of the right?' (*al-Waqi'a*: 27); and 'And if he was of the companions of the right, [90] Then [the angels will say], 'Peace for you; [you are] from the companions of the right. [91]' (*al-Waqi'a*: 91) The people on the right-hand side are the ones who are given their books in their right hands. They were blessed in the worldly life and spent their lifetime in obeying Allah *the Almighty*. Thus, they deserved to be given their books in their right hands.

Allah *the Almighty* concludes this chapter saying:



وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا هُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ ﴿١٩﴾ عَلَيْهِمْ نَارٌ مُّؤَصَّدَةٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

**But those who disbelieve in Our revelations will be on the left-hand side [19] and the Fire will close in on them [20]**  
(The Quran, *al-Balad*: 19 - 20)

As for those who disbelieve in Allah's Verses, they will be on the left-hand side; they will be given their books in their left hands. They are the wretched people who wronged themselves because they committed the major wrongdoing, that is, disbelief in Allah *the Almighty* His Books and Revelations. Their misdeeds and major sins encompass them from all directions. As for His saying: 'and the Fire will close in on them.' (*al-Balad*: 20), it means that the fire will enclose them and its doors will not be opened for them. Allah *the Almighty* made it encompass them eternally; there is no light, way out or exit. They are locked forever in the fire, and its doors will never be opened for them.



the chapter of

***ash-Shams***



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

**T**he chapter of *ash-Shams*<sup>(1)</sup> (The Sun).

Allah *the Almighty* says:



**By the sun in its morning brightness [1]  
and by the moon as it follows it [2] by the day  
as it displays the sun's glory [3] and by the night as it  
conceals it [4] (The Quran, *ash-Shams*: 1-4)**

Allah *the Almighty* swears by the sun and its light which covers the worldly life and penetrates the darkness of the night when the sun rises. This is one of Allah's universal signs that are mentioned 32 times in the Quran as a proof of the greatness of His creation and an argument against the disputatious people. For example, He *the Almighty* relates the story of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) with An-Namrud, saying: 'Ibrahim said, "Indeed, Allah brings up the sun from the east, so bring it up from the west." So the disbeliever was overwhelmed [by astonishment], and Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.' (*al-Baqara*: 258)

Allah *the Almighty* made the sun a shining lamp which contains light, warmth, and heat. It is an essential source of life for the creatures living on the earth. It is the largest lamp in the world that provides us with light. At the

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(1) The chapter of *Ash-Shams*, counting 15 verses and 54 words, is number 91 in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *Al-Qadr* and before that of *Al-Buruj*. It is number 26 in the order of the Quranic revelation.

same time, it provides us with warmth according to a precise, Divine Measure. Before it rises on our country, it has risen on other countries and provided them with its light and warmth. As it rises over us, it will set to rise over other countries. It will do the same function every day until the time of the Hour approaches. When Allah *the Almighty* causes the universal system to be disordered, the sun will rise from the west.

Some people worshipped the sun and prostrated to it, being heedless that it is a created being and not the Creator. They should have worshipped Allah *the Almighty* Who created the sun, instead. In this connection, He *Glorified is He* says: 'And of His signs are the night and day and the sun and moon. Do not prostrate to the sun or to the moon, but prostrate to Allah, who created them, if it should be Him that you worship.' (*Fussilat*: 37) The word 'sign' refers to the wonderful matters that attract the attention and make the person stand before it lengthily to ponder on its wonders.

Allah *the Almighty* does not only swear by the sun but also by one of its times when it is in the sky, that is, the morning. He *the Almighty* says: 'By the sun in its morning brightness.' (*ash-Shams*: 1) The morning is the time of movement and toil when the sun is overhead, in its way to sunset after passing the meridian. It is the first part of the day. So Allah *the Almighty* swears by a universal phenomenon that the people witness. He *Glorified is He* created the day and made the morning the most important time of activity, movement and seeking provision. It is the time of the events that the people witness. For this reason, Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* chooses that time to be the appointment to face the Pharaoh of Egypt, saying: '...Your appointment is the day of the Festival and let the people be gathered together in the early forenoon.' (*Ta Ha*: 59) He *peace be upon him* chose the forenoon for gathering the people so that the place would be clear. So, he accepted the challenge and chose the clearest time of the day to be the time of the confrontation because it would be the most crowded time in the festival. He did not make that appointment at the early time of the morning to make sure that all the people had already left their houses. Further, he neither chose the noon because the heat might prevent the people from coming, and nor did he choose the evening so that the people were not prevented by the darkness from gathering and having a clear sight.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘and by the moon as it follows it.’ (*ash-Shams*: 2), the moon is another sign of Allah’s universal signs. As the sun lightens our day, the moon lightens our night when the sun sets and rises in other countries. The sun and the moon are made subservient to the human being to be able to live on the earth. No one of Allah’s creatures can attribute these signs to him/herself or to anyone else. No one will claim, until the Hour is established, that s/he raised the sky without pillars or created the sun and the moon and subjected them to serve the human being.

As for His saying: ‘...as it follows it.’ (*ash-Shams*: 2), it means that the moon appears after the sun. The intended meaning is that the light of the moon appears after the sun’s shining brightness disappears. This is due to the fact that the moon is always existent but its light disappears during the existence of the sun’s shining brightness. The moon’s light is derived from the sun’s shining brightness. So it not intrinsic as it is derived from the sun rays that reflect on it, like the mirror that reflects the light. There is a difference between the sun and the moon with regard to their light. The former provides a shining brightness and the latter provides light. The shining brightness produces warmth and heat, whereas the light does not produce heat. That is why man does not need to be covered from its light, which is not the case with the sun. According to Al-Farra’, the verse means that the moon derives its light from the sun.

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘by the day as it displays the sun’s glory.’ (*ash-Shams*: 3), the Arabic word *At-Tagliya* means to display and reveal. This happens when the day comes. Here, the action is attributed to the day but could be also attributed to Allah *the Almighty* that is, He displays the sun’s glory. Further, the day eliminates the darkness of the night. So, the object pronoun in the verse refers to the darkness of the night. The sun of the day eliminates the darkness and displays the creatures on the earth. The day has well known effects on the human being. S/he may forget the beauty of the day and its effects due to its monotony. However, mentioning the day in the verse in question directs man’s attention to reflect on it, as it is a great phenomenon.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘and by the night as it conceals it.’ (*ash-Shams*: 4) When the night comes, quietness prevails. The night conceals the earth, the

worldly life and the day by its darkness. Likewise, He *Glorified is He* says: '...He throws the veil of night over the day, which it pursues incessantly...' (*al-A'raf*: 54). Man should not think that there is a contradiction between the night that conceals the perceived objects and the day that displays them, for they are complementary. Man's activity during the day comes from having rest during the night; and the activity during the day necessitates having rest during the night.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَالسَّمَاءَ وَمَا بَنَاهَا ۝ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا طَحَاهَا ۝

**By the sky and how He built it [5] and by the earth  
and how He spread it [6] (The Quran, *ash-Shams*: 5 - 6)**

'Building' signifies firmness and cohesion. The sky is a strong, cohesive canopy, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'And the heaven, We raised it high with power, and most surely We are the makers of things ample.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 47) It is a lofty building raised by Allah *the Almighty* Who says: 'And the heaven, He raised it high, and He made the balance.' (*ar-Rahman*: 7) Although it is far high over the people, it does not fall on them because it was built perfectly with Allah's perfect Power. The heaven and the earth are the places where we all live; the earth carries us and the sky is over us. In another verse, He *the Almighty* says: 'I swear by the heaven full of ways.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 7) This verse means that the sky was created precisely that its unperceivable atoms are connected to each other; that is why we see it smooth.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'and by the earth and how He spread it. [6]' (*ash-Shams*: 6) This means that He *Glorified is He* spread the earth from all its directions. Here, He *the Almighty* swears by the earth and the One Who created and spread it. The Arabic word *Bast* means to spread something, as in Allah's saying: 'And the earth, We have made it plain and cast in it mountains and We have made to grow therein of all beautiful kinds.' (*Qaf*: 57) This does not mean that the earth is spread out before the man. The well-established universal fact is that the earth is spherical. So, the right way of understanding the meaning of His saying: 'And the earth, We have made it plain...' (*Qaf*: 57) is



that when we stand somewhere, we find the earth, which means that it has no end or edges. That is to say that Allah *the Almighty* spread out the earth before the human being so that wherever s/he goes, s/he finds a part of the earth. This is only possible when it is spherical. So, spreading the earth refers to the natural extension of any place in the earth through which we travel. Were the earth squared, rectangular or triangular, we would find an end and an edge for it. Further, we would fall if we reached its edge. However, if we walked in a straight line, we would return to the same spot where we have started. This is due to the fact that the curve of the earth is made precisely and accurately that the eye cannot perceive it, and thus see it straight. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘By the sky and how He built it [5] and by the earth and how He spread it. [6]’ (*ash-Shams*: 5-6) In fact, He *the Almighty* is the Originator of the heaven and the earth and the One Who created them wonderfully without any previous pattern.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* tells us about the soul of the human being who lives on that earth and under that sky, saying:

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا ﴿٧﴾ فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا ﴿٨﴾  
قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا ﴿٩﴾ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا ﴿١٠﴾

**By the soul and how He formed it [7] and inspired it [to  
know] its own rebellion and piety! [8] The one who purifies  
his soul succeeds [9] and the one who corrupts it fails [10]  
(The Quran, *ash-Shams*: 7 - 10)**

As Allah *the Almighty* perfected the creation of the heaven and the earth, He *Glorified is He* perfected man’s creation and formed him/her in the best image, shape and measure. Further, He *the Almighty* perfected the creation of man’s soul and made it able to do good or evil. The word ‘soul’ could refer to the human being. So, the meaning of the verse would be that He *Glorified is He* formed man’s hands, feet, eyes and ears. In the chapter of *Al-Balad*, He *the Almighty* says: ‘Did We not give him eyes, [8] a tongue, lips, [9] and point out to him the two clear ways [of good and evil]? [10]’ (*al-Balad*: 8-10) Here, He *the Almighty* says: ‘By the soul and how He formed it [7] and inspired it [to

know] its own rebellion and piety! [8]' (*ash-Shams*: 7-8) The Arabic word *An-Najdayn* refers to the way of good and piety, and the way of evil and rebellion. He *Glorified is He* has given the man various means of perception like the hearing, the sight and the heart. Further, He has shown him/her the good and evil ways. Now, we have the choice to take either the way of piety or that of rebellion. Moreover, He *the Almighty* has given man the mind that distinguishes between both ways and that can realise the consequences of taking each one.

Piety means to fear Allah *the Almighty* and refrain from what incurs His punishment or provokes His Majestic Attributes like Compelling, Power, Overwhelming and Revenge. It means to fear Him *the Almighty* in everything we do or abstain from.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'The one who purifies his soul succeeds.' (*ash-Shams*: 9) When He *Glorified is He* talks about Faith, its outcome and fruit, He mentions *Al-Falah* 'success' as the outcome of that Faith. The root of the Arabic word *Falah* has a tangible meaning. All what the earth produces needs *Filaha* (farming) and the farmer is called *Fallah*. Allah *the Almighty* wished to call the good outcome of faith '*Falah*' (success), as He says here: 'The one who purifies his soul succeeds.' (*ash-Shams*: 9) 'To purify the soul' means to cleanse it from the impurities and to clarify it from the sins and misdeeds. The Arabic word *zakat* (purity) also means growth. So, the person should increase and elevate the traits of goodness within his/herself. In order to purify his/her soul and increase its goodness, one should preserve his/her luminous faculties through eating what is lawful. Besides, s/he should become accustomed to doing the acts of obedience to maintain these faithful faculties.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'and the one who corrupts it fails.' (*ash-Shams*: 10) In this regard, failure means to overburden oneself due to following the way of rebellion and evil. This is similar to His saying: 'and he who forges (a lie) indeed fails to attain (his desire).' (*Ta Ha*: 61); and 'and he who bears iniquity is indeed a failure.' (*Ta Ha*: 111) Such a person loses and fails because s/he does not follow Allah's Way of Guidance; rather, s/he forges lies and wrongs him/herself, let alone doing injustice to other people.

As for the Arabic word *Dassa*, it means to hide something inside another. It refers here to the act of corrupting the soul. The same word is used in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...or bury it (alive) in the dust?' (*an-Nahl*: 59)

This means to hide it alive in the dust. Likewise, the one who corrupts his/her soul, hides and buries it inside sins, evil deeds, whims, and errors. S/he corrupts his/her soul through misguiding, tempting, and discouraging it from becoming obedient, successful and righteous. Thus, such a person is in deep loss and failure.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* tells us about the people of Thamud as an example of those who misguided themselves and led themselves to perdition when they disobeyed Allah *the Almighty* and the Messenger sent to them. He *Glorified is He* says:

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَاهَا ۖ إِذِ انبَعَثَ أَشْقَاهَا ۚ  
فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ نَاقَةَ اللَّهِ وَسُقْيَاهَا ۚ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَعَقَرُوهَا  
فَدَمَدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِذَنبِهِمْ فَسَوَّاهَا ۚ وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقْبَاهَا ۚ

**In their arrogant cruelty, the people of Thamud called [their messenger] a liar [11] when the most wicked man among them rose [against him] [12] The messenger of God said to them, ‘[Leave] God’s camel to drink’ [13] but they called him a liar and hamstrung her. Their Lord destroyed them for their crime and levelled them [14] He did not hesitate to punish them [15] (The Quran, *ash-Shams*: 11-15)**

Allah *Glorified is He* guided the people of Thamud to the way of piety, good, righteousness and success. However, they preferred error to guidance, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: ‘And as to Thamud, We showed them the right way, but they chose error above guidance, so there overtook them the scourge of an abasing chastisement for what they earned.’ (*Fussilat*: 17) Some people do not opt for the way of guidance by the free choice that He *the Almighty* has given to man. Likewise, He *the Almighty* directed the people of Thamud to the Way of Guidance but they preferred and followed the way of error and disobedience.

The Call of Prophet Saleh (shelah) *peace be upon him* was similar to the Calls of all the Messengers, a fact which is deduced from Allah’s saying: ‘And to Thamud (We sent) their brother Saleh. He said: O my people! Serve

Allah, you have no god other than Him...' (*al-A'raf*: 73). The miracle that proved his truthfulness was the she-camel that his people asked to be brought forth from a specific rock. They stipulated that it should be pregnant. When Allah *the Almighty* brought it forth, Prophet Saleh (shelah) *peace and blessings be upon him* said to them: '...clear proof indeed has come to you from your Lord; this is (as) Allah's she-camel for you-- a sign, therefore leave her alone to pasture on Allah's earth, and do not touch her with any harm, otherwise painful chastisement will overtake you.' (*al-A'raf*: 73) Allah *the Almighty* sent this she-camel for the interest of the people of Thamud; it provided them with unmatched milk in return for drinking one full day from their well. They would then drink the next day. In this way, they had both milk and water. However, they disbelieved in Allah *the Almighty* and in Prophet Saleh (shelah) and were ungrateful for Allah's Blessings. In this connection, He *Glorified is He* says: 'He said: This is a she-camel; she shall have her portion of water, and you have your portion of water on an appointed time.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 155)

For this reason, He *the Almighty* says here: 'In their arrogant cruelty, the people of Thamud called [their Messenger] a liar.' (*ash-Shams*: 11) The people of Thamud belied their Prophet, exactly like the people of 'Ad, Lut, Shu'aib (Jethro), Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham) and Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon them all*. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'And if they deny you, [O Muhammad] - so, before them, did the people of Noah and 'Ad and Thamud deny [their prophets], [42] And the people of Abraham and the people of Lot [43] And the inhabitants of Midyan ... [44]' (*al-Hajj*: 42-44). The people of Thamud did not only disbelieve but also transcended all the limits. Further, they did not only deny the Messenger but also slaughtered the she-camel that was providing them with milk and was beneficial for them. What harm would come upon them if they left it and its calf?! It is as if their arrogant cruelty, as Mujahid holds, is their act of disobedience.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'When the wicked man among them rose [against him].' (*ash-Shams*: 12) This verse refers to the nine people who were the most wicked and cruel disbelievers and deniers among the people of Thamud. Allah *the Almighty* says about those wicked people who dared to slaughter the she-camel: 'And there were in the city nine persons who made

mischievous in the land and did not act aright.’ (*an-Naml*: 48) They were people of sheer corruption, doing no act of reform. On the contrary, whenever they were given something good, they corrupted it because they persisted in making mischief. In fact, some people benefit from corruption and oppose for its sake the people of reform and goodness, as they put an end to their corruption. For example, we find those people who benefit from corruption hate the one who abides by the religious teachings and the moral principles. Such corrupt people are the only group that rose against Messengers and their followers.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘The Messenger of Allah said to them, ‘[Leave] Allah’s camel to drink.’ (*ash-Shams*: 13) Here, Prophet Saleh (Shelah) warns his people against doing any harm to the she-camel. After all, it is the miracle that they asked for. It is attributed to Allah *the Almighty* and that is why it has a great rank, exactly as we say, ‘Allah’s Book and Allah’s House.’ Thus, they should have respected this fact and held the she-camel in its due position. We notice that the word *Naqa* (she-camel) is in the accusative form. So, it is as if Prophet Saleh (shelah) said to them, ‘Beware of doing any harm to Allah’s she-camel or preventing it from drinking. This is Allah’s Rule and only the rebellious people violate it.’ Elsewhere, he *peace be upon him* said: ‘And, O my people! This will be (as) Allah’s she-camel for you, a sign; therefore, leave her to pasture on Allah’s earth and do not touch her with evil, for then a near chastisement will overtake you.’ (*Hud*: 64) However, his people belied the fact that if they harmed the she-camel or prevented it from drinking, they would be overtaken by a painful punishment.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘But they called him a liar and hamstrung her. Their Lord destroyed them for their crime and levelled them.’ (*ash-Shams*: 14) They dared to slaughter the she-camel itself. The verb referring to slaughtering the she-camel is in the plural form. So, did all the people of the tribe participate in that crime? No, only Qidar ibn Salif slaughtered it. However, it is as if all of them committed that crime when they unanimously approved and supported it after being asked about their opinion. Due to their unanimous approval, Qidar killed it. The word *A‘qar* means to strike the legs of the she-camel to be slaughtered after falling on the earth. Only an experienced butcher can do that act; that is why Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...so he took (the sword) and slew (her).’ (*al-Qamar*: 29)

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘...Their Lord destroyed them for their crime and levelled them.’ (*ash-Shams*: 14) He *the Almighty* seized them with an earthquake. So, the punishment overwhelmed them and totally annihilated them. Allah *Glorified is He* punished them for the crimes they had committed, like denying the Messenger sent to them. He *the Almighty* does not do the least act of injustice against His servants. As He *Glorified is He* does not wrong anyone, He *the Almighty* says: ‘...therefore taste the chastisement for what you earned.’ (*al-A‘raf*: 39) Punishing those criminals is not an act of injustice on the part of Allah *the Almighty* on account of His Compelling Power over His servants. Rather, it is the fair rule issued on grounds of their crimes and misdeeds.

So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...and levelled them.’ (*ash-Shams*: 14) means that the earthquake overtook them, and the punishment included the young and the old, all shared the same punishment. Some scholars opine that this part of the verse means levelling their houses with their graves that they dug inside their houses. They mummified themselves when they became sure about their perishing. He *Glorified is He* tells us about the punishment of the people of Thamud, saying: ‘Then as to Thamud, they were destroyed by an excessively severe punishment.’ (*al-Haqq*: 5); and ‘And the rumbling overtook those who were unjust, so they became motionless bodies in their abodes, [67] As though they had never dwelt in them; now surely did Thamud disbelieve in their Lord; now surely, away with Thamud. [68]’ (*Hud*: 67-68) Their punishment is once called ‘the excessively severe punishment’ because they: ‘In their arrogant cruelty, the people of Thamud called [their Messenger] a liar.’ (*ash-Shams*: 11) So, their punishment that overtook them was excessively destructive. This punishment is also called ‘the Rumbling’ and also ‘the Earthquake’, as in His saying: ‘Then the earthquake overtook them, so they became motionless bodies in their abode.’ (*al-A‘raf*: 78) Further it is called ‘the Scourge,’ as in His saying: ‘but if they turn aside, then say: I have warned you of a scourge like the scourge of ‘Ad and Thamud.’ (*Fussilat*: 13) These are four kinds of punishments; that is why He *the Almighty* says: ‘...and levelled them.’ (*ash-Shams*: 14) It is a destructive, rumbling and scourging punishment. Consequently, every one of the people of Thamud perished in the state it overtook him/her. It is an overwhelming punishment that struck their hearts

and paralysed their limbs, as He *the Almighty* says: ‘...so they became motionless bodies in their abode.’ (*al-A‘raf*: 78)

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘He did not hesitate to punish them.’ (*ash-Shams*: 15) Scholars hold two different views about this verse. First, the subject of the verb *Yakhaf* (to fear or hesitate) is attributed to Allah *the Almighty*. Accordingly, the meaning is that no one can adjust His Decision or repel His Decree. He *the Almighty* fears no one when He sends the punishment on the deniers who rebel against Him. This is a severe threat for the disbelievers of Mecca. He *Glorified is He* does not fear the outcome of the punishment befalling the disbelievers. So, the people should fear Him and hold Him in awe. The second view is that the subject of the verb is attributed to the slaughterer of the she-camel. He slaughtered it without fearing the consequences of his heinous crime against Allah’s she-camel. Further, he has insisted on committing this crime out of denying Prophet Saleh (Shelah) *peace be upon him*. As his people approved that action, they deserved the punishment that has befallen them.





the chapter of

***al-Layl***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Layl* <sup>(1)</sup> (The Night).

Allah *the Almighty* says:



**By the enshrouding night [1] by the radiant day [2]  
by His creation of male and female! [3] The ways you take  
differ greatly [4] (The Quran, *al-Layl*: 1-4)**

Here, Allah *the Almighty* swears by the night and the day, which are the greatest perceivable signs that no one can deny. They, along with the sun and the moon, are correlated signs; the day is the result of the sunrise and the night is the result of the sunset. He *Glorified is He* uses the night in the first verse as a subject of causing darkness, while the night itself is the object of another subject, which is the sunset. Likewise, the day that displays the earth with its light is the result of the sunrise. The night is related to tranquillity and rest, whereas the day is related to movement and activity. As Allah *Glorified is He* made the day the time of labour, He *Glorified is He* made the night the time of tranquillity, sleep, rest and quietness. The rest at night ensures working during the day, as the human being sleeps during the quiet night to resume his/her work during the day. Thus, the day and night are complementary rather than contradictory.

In this Chapter, the night is mentioned before the day, for each one of them has a function. The function of the day cannot be carried out unless

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(1) The chapter of *Al-Layl*, counting 21 verses and 91 words, is number 92 in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *Al-'Ala* and before that of *Al-Fajr*.

that of the night is duly carried out. In other words, working at the day requires the existence of the night, as these great blessings are equal and mutually support each other. In this regard, man is similar to the machine that should be switched off so that it is not prematurely ruined. The machine that works three shifts, 24 hours a day with non-stop, will be damaged quicker than the machine that works two shifts. Further, the one working only one shift will live the longest among them.

This is a manifestation of Allah's Mercy, as He *Glorified is He* says: 'And out of His Mercy He has made for you the night and the day, that you may rest therein, and that you may seek of His grace...' (*al-Qasas*: 73). This verse means that we should rest at night and seek Allah's Graces and Provision during the day. He *the Almighty* gathers between the day and night and mentions the function of both of them to clarify their correlation and complementarity. If one does not have rest at night and sleep for a while, s/he will not be able to seek Allah's Graces and the means of substance during the day.

Allah *the Almighty* says: 'By the enshrouding night, [1] by the radiant day. [2]' (*al-Layl*: 1-2) He *the Almighty* swears by the night as it enshrouds the horizon and all what is between the heaven and the earth with its darkness, causing the day to fade away. Afterwards, He *Glorified is He* swears by the day when it appears in the universe with its light that causes the darkness of the night to go away. That light reveals what the night conceals with its darkness like the objects, the road, etc.

Afterwards, He *the Almighty* swears, saying: 'by His creation of male and female!' (*al-Layl*: 3) He *Glorified is He* takes an Oath by Himself as the Creator of male and female. In fact, mankind is divided into males and females, who both have common functions and qualities. They are the opposite of each other but one should not think they are contradictory, for Allah *the Almighty* made them complementary to ensure the success of life. If the two genders contradicted each other, the life will be ruined. As the day and the night have specific functions, the male and the female have specific functions. If the functions were altered or mixed with each other, this will cause corruption. It is as if the male and the female are like the night and the day; they are complementary and mutually cooperative. We should not take

them as enemies but rather recognize the complementary aspect between them. Therefore, as we should not consider the day and the night contradictory to each other, we should not do the same with regard to the male and the female.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘The ways you take differ greatly.’ (*al-Layl*: 4) This verse shows that each one has a specific function and objective in life. Everyone takes the way that leads him/her to that objective. Our movements during the night and the day are different, just like the function of the male and the female. If the functions are mixed and we messed the system of life up, it will collapse and we will suffer the bad consequences of this action until we find a solution after the escalation of the problem. We have called for woman’s work but for half of the working hour (of the man) to spare a period of time, to take care of her home; or she should dedicate her life for taking care of the home if she has enough income or if her husband can meet all the needs of the familial life. However, no one considered that call until we suffered the hardship of these experiences.

The problem lies in shifting the function of a certain object to another, whether in relation to the time or the human being. Every creature in the universe has a special function and endeavour that no other creature shares. The function of the day and night are complementary, and not contradictory. Likewise, the male and the female are created differently so that their functions complete each other instead of contradicting each other.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَعْطَىٰ وَاتَّقَىٰ ۝۵ وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَىٰ ۝۶ فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ لِلْيُسْرَىٰ ۝۷ وَأَمَّا مَنْ بَخِلَ ۝۸ وَكَذَّبَ بِالْحُسْنَىٰ ۝۹ فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ لِلْعُسْرَىٰ ۝۱۰ وَمَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُ مَالُهُ إِذَا تَرَدَّىٰ ۝۱۱

**There is the one who gives, who is mindful of God, [5] who testifies to goodness —[6] We shall smooth his way towards ease [7] There is the one who is miserly, who is self-satisfied, [8] who denies goodness —[9] We shall smooth his way towards hardship [10] and his wealth will not help him as he falls [11] (The Quran, *al-Layl*: 5 - 11)**

As for the one who gives out charity and shuns disobedience of his/her Lord out of fearing Him, s/he will have his/her way to easiness smoothed for

him/her. Here, spending money in charitable ways is mentioned along with having piety. Such a good believer spends his/her money for the sake of Islam through freeing the captives and the tortured believers. This is similar to the case of Abu Bakr As-Siddiq who spent some of his money to free Bilal ibn Rabah, who was suffering torture to be forced to renounce Islam. Abu Bakr bought him from 'Umayya ibn Khalaf and then emancipated him.

So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'There is the one who gives, who is mindful of Allah, [5] who testifies to goodness—[6] We shall smooth his way towards ease. [7]' (*al-Layl*: 5-7) refers to the one who gives out the due money and fears of being disobedient and ungrateful, or it refers to the one who embraced monotheism, rejected polytheism, shunned ungratefulness and believed in Allah's Promise. To such a person: 'We shall smooth his way towards ease. [7]' (*al-Layl*: 7) This means that Allah *the Almighty* will make the religious actions easy for him/her, as He *Glorified is He* opens his/her heart for monotheism and Islam, and makes following them an easy matter for him/her.

As for His saying: 'who testifies to goodness.' (*al-Layl*: 6), it means that s/he believes in Allah's Promise for the pious people, namely: - entering the paradise. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'Allah has promised to the believing men and the believing women gardens, beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them, and goodly dwellings in gardens of perpetual abode; and best of all is Allah's goodly pleasure; that is the grand achievement.' (*at-Tawba*: 72) Allah *the Almighty* promises those who abide by His Way of Guidance that they will have the paradise, the blissful life and goodness. The promise means to give someone the glad tidings about something good that will take place in the future.

Further, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'For those who do good is good (reward) and more (than this)...' (*at-Tawba*: 26). The good reward here means that they will have the recompense for their good deeds doubled many times. As for what is more than this reward, it is gazing at Allah *the Almighty*. This is the unmatched addition. So, the good reward is the paradise and the addition is gazing at the Bestower of the Blessings *Glorified is He*.

Back to the verse in question, the word 'goodness' refers to what is added to the due reward of the pious person. With regard to His saying:

‘We shall smooth his way towards ease.’ (*al-Layl*: 7), it means that Allah *the Almighty* makes the good actions of such a person easy for him/her due to His pleasure with him/her. These good actions include spending money charitably in the good ways and doing acts of obedience to Him *the Almighty*. He *Glorified is He* will facilitate the good deeds that s/he intended to do to the extent that obedience becomes the easiest matter for him/her. In the verse in question, the word ‘easiness’ refers to the delightful state in both the worldly life and the Hereafter.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘There is the one who is miserly, who is self-satisfied.’ (*al-Layl*: 8), it refers to the one who, out of misery, did not give alms and charities, being indifferent to Allah’s Reward. So, out of misery, s/he did not give alms. In addition, out of fake self-satisfaction, s/he was indifferent to Allah *the Almighty*. Consequently, s/he did not fear Him *the Almighty* which is why He *Glorified is He* satisfied him/her with the worldly pleasures at the expense of that of the paradise. His/her evil deed of denying the goodness is added to his/her misery and being indifferent to Allah *the Almighty* and His Reward. In this regard, He *Glorified is He* says about the niggardly who does not spend out of the money that He *the Almighty* has given him/her and, therefore, s/he does not pay the *zakat* or give alms to the poor and the needy: ‘Behold! You are those who are called upon to spend in Allah’s Way, but among you are those who are niggardly, and whoever is niggardly is niggardly against his own soul; and Allah is Self-Sufficient and you have need (of Him)...’ (*Muhammad*: 38). Due to His Omnipotence, He *the Almighty* does not need the money that such people give as charity or *zakat*. The one who withholds his/her money is only depriving him/herself of the Divine Bestowals. Let the one who is indifferent to the paradise disobey Allah *the Almighty* for s/he will abide eternally in the hell.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘who denies goodness.’ (*al-Layl*: 9), it means that such a person disbelieves in the fact that there is no god but Allah, and denies His promised paradise and reward. So, the one who is niggardly against his/her soul by not giving out money, indifferent to his/her Lord and His Guidance and denying His Call and Religion- for such a person: ‘We shall smooth his way towards hardship.’ (*al-Layl*: 10)

By contrast, He *the Almighty* says about the pious people: 'We shall smooth his way towards ease.' (*al-Layl*: 7) So, in both cases the human being will have his/her way smoothed for him/her, whether s/he believes or denies goodness. Allah *the Almighty* draws the good and the evil ways to the human being and gives him/her many chances to follow the way of guidance. However, if s/he is a disbeliever, indifferent to Allah's Reward, miserly as to giving out money and a niggardly against his/her soul, He *the Almighty* will smooth this way for him/her. He *the Almighty* facilitates for him/her the actions of the people of hell, humiliates him/her and makes obedience difficult for him/her. Thus, the way of disobedience and evil will be smoothed for him/her.

In this connection, it is reported that 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb said, 'While we were in a funeral procession in Baqi' Al-Gharqad, Allah's Messenger and sat down, and we sat around him. He had a small stick in his hand and he bent his head and started scraping the ground with it. He then said, 'There is none among you, and no created soul but has his place written for him either in paradise or in the Hell-Fire, and also has his happy or miserable fate (in the Hereafter) written for him.' A man said, 'O Allah's Messenger! Shall we depend upon what is written for us and give up doing (good) deeds? For whoever among us is destined to be fortunate (in the Hereafter), will join the fortunate peoples and whoever among us is destined to be miserable will do such deeds as are characteristic of the people who are destined to misery.' Prophet Muhammad said, 'Those who are destined to be happy (in the Hereafter) will find it easy and pleasant to do the deeds characteristic of those destined to happiness, while those who are to be among the miserable (in the Hereafter), will find it easy to do the deeds characteristic of those destined to misery.'<sup>(1)</sup>

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'and his wealth will not help him as he falls.' (*al-Layl*: 11) This means that his/her wealth will not benefit him/her, for s/he will fall into the fire. The Arabic word *At-Taraddi* means to fall in

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(1) See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 6/2647; and Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 4969.



an abyss. This word is used to refer to the animal that falls from a mountain or in a well, as in His saying: ‘...or by a head-long fall...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 11). So, when such a person falls into the Fire, his/her wealth will be of no avail for him/her; it will not save him/her from the abyss into which s/he has fallen. In this regard, He *the Almighty* 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: [25] And I had not known what my account was: [26] O would that it had made an end (of me): [27] My wealth has availed me nothing: [28]’ (*al-Haqqa*: 25-28) Further, He *the Almighty* says in the chapter of *al-Masad*: ‘Perdition overtake both hands of Abu Lahab, and he will perish. [1] His wealth and what he earns will not avail him. [2]’ (*an-Nasr*: 1-2)

The disbelievers and the hypocrites may wrongly think that they will be saved by seeking their children’s support, paying their wealth as a ransom or having friends or intercessors. In fact, the wealth and children will avail no one on the Day of Judgment. No one can buy a room for him/herself in the paradise by his/her wealth, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: ‘(As for) those who disbelieve, surely neither their wealth nor their children shall avail them in the least against Allah, and these it is who are the fuel of the Fire.’ (*Al-’Imran*: 10) So, nothing will avail or safeguard the disbelievers and the hypocrites against the fire of the hell, including wealth, children, spouse, brother or family. No one on earth will save them, a fact which is deduced from His saying: ‘The guilty one would fain redeem himself from the chastisement of that day by (sacrificing) his children, [11] And his wife and his brother [12] And the nearest of his kinsfolk who gave him shelter, [13] And all those that are in the earth, (wishing) then (that) this might deliver him.[14]’ (*al-Ma’arij*: 11-14) Allah *the Almighty* then shatters the disbeliever’s and the denier’s hope, saying: ‘By no means! Surely it is a flaming fire [15] Dragging by the head. [16]’ (*al-Ma’arij*: 15-16)

He *the Almighty* then says:

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا لَلْهُدَىٰ ۖ وَإِنَّ لَنَا لَلْآخِرَةَ وَالْأُولَىٰ ۚ فَأَنْذَرْتُكُمْ نَارًا تَلَظَّىٰ ﴿١٤﴾  
لَا يَصْلَاهَا إِلَّا الْأَشْقَى ﴿١٥﴾ الَّذِي كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ﴿١٦﴾

**Our part is to provide guidance —[12] this world and the  
next belong to Us —[13] so I warn you about the raging Fire [14]  
in which none but the most wicked one will burn [15]  
who denied [the truth], and turned away [16]  
(The Quran, *al-Layl*: 12 - 16)**

As for His saying: ‘Our part is to provide guidance.’ (*al-Layl*: 12), it means that Allah *the Almighty* has shown man the way of guidance when He created him/her. In this connection, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘and point out to him the two clear ways [of good and evil]?’ (*ash-Shams*: 10) So, He *the Almighty* pointed out to the man the way of Truth and that of falsehood. Guidance means to direct someone to the way leading to his/her objective. This entails the existence of a guide, a guided person and a desirable objective. That is why the misguided is the one who lost the Right Way, followed another false way and strayed far away from the Way of Guidance and Allah’s Religion. So, He *the Almighty* states that it is His part to guide us to the Truth. Further, He *Glorified is He* informs the people that their ultimate return will be to Him. As long as this is the case, the people should choose the right way and shun the evil one.

Afterwards, He *the Almighty* says: ‘this world and the next belong to Us.’ (*al-Layl*: 13) So, if the worldly life and the Hereafter belong to Him *Glorified is He* where will the disbelievers escape? The Kingdom of the heaven and the earth belongs to Him and that is why He *Glorified is He* bestows His Blessings on whomever He wishes from among His creatures. He *the Almighty* has a full control over both lives and can smooth the person to the way of ease or hardship. For this reason, the people have no right to seek refuge in another deity whether it is an idol, a person, a planet, the sun, or any other creature. This is due to the fact that these deities have no control over anything in both the worldly life and the Hereafter.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘so I warn you about the raging Fire.’ (*al-Layl*: 4) The raging of the fire indicates that it is terribly blazing

and burning to the extent that it breaks the bones of the one who is thrown into it. So, the people should beware of doing any action that leads them to that burning, blazing fire. In another verse, He *the Almighty* says: ‘By no means! Surely it is a flaming fire [15] Dragging by the head, [16] It shall claim him who turned and fled (from truth), [17] And amasses (wealth) then shuts it up. [18]’ (*al-Ma’arij*: 15-18) This fire roasts the bones, breaks them up and dislocates them along with the joints. It knows its people who denied, rejected and turned away from faith.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘in which none but the most wicked one will burn.’ (*al-Layl*: 15) This means that the one who turned away and disbelieved in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the only person who eternally suffers the hardship and the heat of that fire. He *Glorified is He* does not say, ‘but the wicked’, otherwise the believers who commit the major sins would be included in the verse, as the *Mu’tazilites* believe. On the contrary, the verse includes only the ‘most wicked’ people, that is, the disbelievers, the deniers and the rejecters of Faith. The Arabic word *As-Saliyy* means dwelling eternally in the fire, not just entering it for a short time. If the believers who commit the major sins enter the fire, that will be for a short time as a recompense for their sins. However, neither will they be at the level of the disbelievers nor will they abide therein eternally. They will get out after repaying for their sins.

Allah *the Almighty* clarifies who are the ‘most wicked people,’ saying: ‘who denied [the truth], and turned away. [16]’ (*al-Layl*: 16) Such a person denied what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came with, turned his/her back on him and turned away from believing in Him. S/he denied monotheism, turned away from Faith and obedience to Allah and was fully controlled by the Satan.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَسَيُجَنَّبُهَا الْأَتْقَى (١٧) الَّذِي يُؤْتِي مَالَهُ يَتَزَكَّى (١٨)

**The most pious one will be spared this —[17]  
who gives his wealth away as self-purification [18]  
(The Quran, *al-Layl*: 17-18)**

As for the one who will be saved from the raging fire, s/he is the most pious person, who fears Allah the most. Neither will s/he approach the fire, nor will it come near him/her. S/he will spare the fire as s/he has shunned disobedience and feared Allah *the Almighty* and the fire. That is why s/he will be saved from it and it will never touch him with its blazing and raging fire. Now who is the most pious? It is the one who: 'gives his wealth away as self-purification.' (*al-Layl*: 18) S/he easily gives away his/her money without account as alms to the poor and the needy. Some scholars hold that the most pious in this verse refers to Abu Bakr, as he gave away his wealth and left nothing for himself. When Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked him, 'What have you saved for yourself?' he replied, 'Allah and His Messenger.' However, the verse is generally applicable, for the consideration is not for the verse's specific cause of revelation, but rather for the generality of its meaning. Thus, any most pious person will spare the fire.

If we reflect on the verses in question, we find them making a comparison between the ultimate fate of a polytheist and that of a believer. They describe the former as the most wicked who will enter the raging fire, as if it was specially created for him/her. The latter is described as the most pious who will be saved, as if the paradise was created especially for him/her. The most wicked could be Abu Jahl or 'Umayya ibn Khalaf and the most pious could be Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him*.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَمَا لِأَحَدٍ عِنْدَهُ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ تُجْزَىٰ ۖ إِلَّا أَتَيْنَا وَجْهَ رَبِّهِ الْأَعْلَىٰ ﴿٢٠﴾  
وَلَسَوْفَ يَرْضَىٰ ﴿٢١﴾

**Not to return a favour to anyone [19] but for the sake of his  
Lord the Most High —[20] and he will be well pleased [21]  
(The Quran, *al-Layl*: 19 - 21)**

Abu Bark As-Siddiq, for example, will be rewarded because he was a pious person and gave away his wealth in the interest of the Muslims. His first act of self-purification is emancipating Bilal ibn Rabah after buying him. Bilal had been suffering a severe torture in the terribly hot sun. Further, a stone had been put on his chest. Abu Bakr did not buy and emancipate him to return a favour to Bilal or anyone else, as the polytheist falsely claimed, saying, ‘Abu Bakr did not do that except because Bilal had done a favour to him.’ That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Not to return a favour to anyone.’ (*al-Layl*: 19) This shows that Abu Bakr did not do that to return a favour to Bilal but rather for the sake of Allah.

In fact, he has done so ‘...for the sake of his Lord *the Most High*.’ (*al-Layl*: 20) The ultimate objective of Faith and every good deed is Allah’s Pleasure and Mercy. That is why He *Glorified is He* says: ‘And among men is he who sells himself to seek the pleasure of Allah...’ (*al-Baqara*: 207); and ‘And the parable of those who spend their property to seek the pleasure of Allah...’ (*al-Baqara*: 265). Seeking Allah’s pleasure in every action is only possible if the human being purified his/her soul from showing off and seeking good reputation and being mentioned by the people. Such actions render the good deeds null and void. The word *Wajh* in this verse refers to Allah’s pleasure and it could refer to His *Glorified is He* Essence. Such a pious person is only doing the good deeds for seeking the Pleasure of His Lord *the Most High*.

Allah *the Almighty* describes Himself as *the Most High* because His Attributes are Exalted and Unmatchable. He is the Most Powerful, the Invincible, whether with regard to the intellectual argument or the tangible power. He *Glorified is He* is the Most High, the Great Who is far Exalted over His creatures. That is why His servant ‘...will be well pleased.’ (*al-Layl*: 21) He

*Glorified is He* makes the servant who follows His Way of Guidance well pleased and, consequently, gives him/her more. So, the meaning of Allah's Pleasure with His servants is to give them what is beyond the necessary elements, as He *Glorified is He* is All-Grateful, All Knowing.

The one who reflects on His saying: '...will be well pleased.' (*al-Layl*: 21) finds that the subject of the verb 'to be pleased' could be attributed to Allah *the Almighty* as He is well pleased with His pious servants who do good deeds for only His sake. Further, the subject could be attributed to the servant, that is, s/he is well pleased with His Lord's reward. S/he will receive the full reward that makes him/her content. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'And (as for) the foremost, the first of the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar*, and those who followed them in goodness, Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them forever; that is, the mighty achievement. [100]' (*at-Tawba*: 100) He *the Almighty* is well pleased with them and gives them the reward that makes them filled with contentment and happiness.

the chapter of

***ad-Duha***





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

**T**he chapter of *ad-Duha* <sup>(1)</sup> (The morn).

وَالضُّحَىٰ ۝١ وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا سَجَىٰ ۝٢ مَا وَدَّعَكَ رَبُّكَ وَمَا قَلَىٰ ۝٣  
وَلَلْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لَّكَ مِنَ الْأُولَىٰ ۝٤ وَلَسَوْفَ يُعْطِيكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرْضَىٰ ۝٥

**By the morning brightness [1] and by the night when it  
grows still [2] your Lord has not forsaken you [Prophet], nor  
does He hate you [3] and the future will be better for you  
than the past [4] your Lord is sure to give you so much that  
you will be well satisfied [5] (The Quran, *ad-Duha*: 1-5)**

The morning brightness is the time of working, toil and exerting efforts, while the night is the time of tranquility. Both of them are necessary; the night and the day are two complementary universal signs – they are not contradictory. His saying: ‘and by the night when it grows still.’ (*ad-Duha*: 2) refers to the time when the night shrouds the world with its long period of darkness, covering the night as the cloak covers the man. This verse refers to the tranquil night when its darkness grows still.

Now, what is the subject of the Oath taken by the morning brightness and the night? It is His saying: ‘your Lord has not forsaken you [Prophet], nor does He hate you.’ (*ad-Duha*: 3) This context of the verse is related to the intermission of the revelation from Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings*

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(1) The chapter of *Ad-Duha*, counting 11 verses and 40 words, is number 93 in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *Al-Fajr* and before that of *Ash-Sharh*. It is the tenth chapter to be revealed.

*be upon him.* It is as if the night represents the tranquil, long period that, whatever long it lasts, will be followed by the daybreak, sunrise, morning brightness and then rising of the sun to the middle of the sky.

Out of Allah's Mercy, He caused the revelation to intermit for a period of time in order that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* longs for its coming due to the sweetness of what had already been revealed to him. His yearning for its coming makes him ready to face the hardships of the Call. When the revelation intermitted, his enemies said, 'Muhammad's Lord has abandoned and forsaken him.'<sup>(1)</sup> They did not remember that he has a Lord except in this matter, after accusing him of telling lies. They were not smart enough to express their point in a way that does not contradict their previous opinions.

Being fully Aware of Messenger Muhammad's tiredness due to receiving the revelation, Allah *the Almighty* intermitted it so that the sweetness of what had been revealed to him remains and the tiredness thereof goes away. In this way, he *peace and blessings be upon him* would yearn for the coming of the revelation. Thus, the intermission of the revelation was intentionally meant in order that he *peace and blessings be upon him* longs for receiving it. This fact should direct our attention to reflect on His saying: 'and the future will be better for you than the past.' (*ad-Duha*: 4) This means that what would be revealed after the intermission of the revelation would fill him *peace and blessings be upon him* with happiness. After the chapter of *ad-Duha*, Allah *the Almighty* says in the chapter of *ash-Sharh*: 'Did We not relieve your heart for you [Prophet], [1] and remove the burden [2] that weighed so heavily on your back, [3] and raise your reputation high? [4]' (*ash-Sharh*: 1-4) Therefore, the disbelievers should not think that Muhammad's Lord has forsaken him. In fact, the revelation would be resumed so that he *peace and blessings be upon him*

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(1) *It is narrated that Jundub ibn 'Abdullah said, 'Once Allah's Messenger became sick and could not offer his night prayer (Tahajjud) for two or three nights. Then a lady (the wife of Abu Lahab) came and said, "O Muhammad! I think that your Satan has forsaken you, for I have not seen him with you for two or three nights!" On that Allah revealed: By the morning brightness [1] and by the night when it grows still, [2] your Lord has not forsaken you [Prophet], nor does He hate you, [3] and the future will be better for you than the past.'* (*Ad-Duha*: 1-3) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 1125, 4950 and 4983; and also Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 114/1797.*

would receive more than what had been sent down before. It is as if He *Glorified is He* clarifies that the morning is the time of toil while the night is the time of tranquility. Likewise, the intermission of the revelation is like the tranquility of the night after which new revelation will be sent down, so that he *peace and blessings be upon him* could resume his activity in the Call. Thus, the intermission of the revelation was meant to help him renew his vitality.

Allah *the Almighty* swears by the morning brightness that He has not forsaken Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Through the intermission of the revelation, He *Glorified is He* has willed to bestow more energy and power on him so that he could increase his activity and effort. This is how He *the Almighty* helped him in his mission. Accordingly, the intermission of the revelation and its resumption represent a complete process like that made by the darkness and the light, and the day and the night. It is like the night in the sense that the people dedicate its time for resting due to their toil during the day.

We notice the preciseness of the miraculous Quranic manner of expression in His saying: ‘your Lord has not forsaken you [Prophet], nor does He hate you.’ (*ad-Duha*: 3) The Arabic verb *Wadda‘a* (to forsake) is directed to Messenger Muhammad in the second person, because this verb refers to abandoning those whom one loves or hates. As for the verb *Qala* (to hate), it is not directed to him in the second person pronoun, because it is only used with the people whom the person hates. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* abstains from directing the verb to him even though it is negated.

The meaning of His saying: ‘and the future will be better for you than the past.’ (*ad-Duha*: 4) is that the latter period of sending down the revelation is better for him than the former one. This is because the latter period would be longer in time and the revelation would be received without difficulties and hardships. Indeed, during that period, the majority of the Quran was easily sent down to him *peace and blessings be upon him*. His enemies rejoiced over him when the revelation was intermitted, saying, ‘Muhammad’s Lord has forsaken him.’ How come they remember that he has a Lord only during this time of intermission?! Did not they say, ‘He is a liar and a sorcerer?’ Now, they say he has a Lord as they wrongly think He has forsaken him. These disbelievers did not understand that his Lord intermitted the revelation for

supreme Wisdom. He *peace and blessings be upon him* should have a psychological rest after the chemical changes that his bodily constitution experienced. This would renew his energy and make him yearn for meeting the Archangel Jibril (Gabriel) once again. Yearning for someone makes the hardships of reaching it seem easy, as the hardships of the way do not prevent the lover from reaching the one s/he loves.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'your Lord is sure to give you so much that you will be well satisfied.' (*ad-Duha*: 5) Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would be deeply sad if one of his *ummah* did not embrace Islam and remained in the state of disbelief. This is why He *the Almighty* says to him *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'To make them walk in the right way is not incumbent on you, but Allah guides aright whom He pleases...' (*al-Baqara*: 272). When His saying: 'your Lord is sure to give you so much that you will be well satisfied.' (*ad-Duha*: 5) was revealed, he *peace and blessings be upon him* seized the opportunity and invoked his Lord, saying, 'I will not be satisfied if one of my *ummah* is in the Fire.' So, he *peace and blessings be upon him* was fully busy with the affairs of his *ummah*, and that is why Allah *the Almighty* describes him, saying: '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) He never forgot his *ummah* in any matter. Consequently, He *Glorified is He* reassures him about his *ummah*, saying, 'Indeed, We will please you with regard to your *ummah* and will never displease you with them.'

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَآوَىٰ ۖ وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَىٰ ۖ  
وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَىٰ

**Did He not find you an orphan and shelter you? [6] Did He not find you lost and guide you? [7] Did He not find you in need and make you self-sufficient? [8] (The Quran, *ad-Duha*: 6 - 8)**

Allah *the Almighty* addresses Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: 'Did He not find you an orphan and shelter you?' (*ad-Duha*: 6)

When he *peace and blessings be upon him* reads this verse, he answers, ‘Yes, my Lord, You found me an orphan and sheltered me.’ This style is called the participation of the commanded person in the rationale of the command, which is the most rhetoric kind of command. He *peace and blessings be upon him* became an orphan after the death of his parents, ‘Abdullah and Amina. He was then sheltered by ‘Abd Al-Muttalib, his grandfather, and then Abu Taleb, his uncle. Allah *the Almighty* gave him shelter in the house of his uncle to be not in need for meeting the requirements of livelihood which may ruin the orphan’s affairs. In this way, he was (morally) educated, protected from all harms and provided with bounties and goodness.

In fact, being an orphan is one of the manifestations of weakness. The orphan is the one whose father dies before s/he attains maturity and puberty. As s/he has lost his/her father and no one cares for him/her, s/he will grieve and be deeply sad when s/he sees other children’s fathers expressing their kindness to them. S/he may hate the Predestination that deprived him/her of his/her father. So, Allah *the Almighty* gave Messenger Muhammad, who lost his parents, shelter in the house of his grandfather, ‘Abd Al-Muttalib, and then in the house of his uncle, Abu Taleb.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: ‘Did He not find you lost and guide you?’ (*ad-Duha*: 7) Misguidance could refer to not reaching the truth, as He *the Almighty* describes Messenger Muhammad here when he shunned idolatry and kept searching for the Way of Guidance. So, the verse means that he *peace and blessings be upon him* did not appreciate worshipping idols which was prevailing among the people of Quraysh. He kept searching for the Right Way until Allah *the Almighty* guided him through revealing the Straight Path to him. So, he *peace and blessings be upon him* was lost, seeking the truth, until the perfect Blessing, prophethood, was given to him. He was lost in the sense of lacking the Right Way and yearning for knowing and following it.

As a matter of fact, the human being could be ambivalent about the way s/he should take. In the case of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Allah alleviated him by guiding him to the Straight Path. Thus, the word ‘lost’ does not mean deviation from the Straight Path; rather, it means that before the coming of the revelation to him, he did not know which way to

take. He *peace and blessings be upon him* denounced idolatry followed by most of the dignitaries and the intellectual people among his people, because it is not consistent with reason and the pure nature. So, he was ambivalent about the falsehood that his people practiced and the truth for which he had no proof.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: 'Did He not find you in need and make you self-sufficient?' (*ad-Duha*: 8) Being in need means that the person is poor. So, did He *Glorified is He* make him self-sufficient through wealth? No; He *Glorified is He* made Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* self-sufficient through the bounties of the Hereafter that he was shown. Accordingly, the meaning is that He *the Almighty* filled his heart with Faith and that is why he did not yearn for the pleasures of the worldly life and did allow it to control him. Further, He *Glorified is He* made him self-sufficient in the material life through not being dependent on anyone in his provision, as he worked as a trader with the wealth of Khadija.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

فَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ ﴿٩﴾ وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَرْ ﴿١٠﴾ وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ ﴿١١﴾

**So do not be harsh with the orphan [9] and do not chide the one who asks for help [10] talk about the blessings of your Lord [11] (The Quran, *ad-Duha*: 9 - 11)**

Harshness denotes domination over the bodies, not the hearts. As the orphan is naturally weak due to the loss of his/her father, one should not be harsh to him/her and should not compel him/her by force. Here, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is commanded to not wrong the orphan or appropriate his/her wealth and right. After all, he was an orphan himself; that is why he should neither frown at the orphans nor treat them harshly for whatever they do. So, the orphans should not be treated as slaves. In this connection, Messenger Muhammad, who was an orphan and was commanded to treat them well, says, 'The one who wipes on the head of an orphan for the sake of Allah only gets ten good deeds for every hair his hand touches. The one who treats the male or the female orphan kindly will be with me like these two in the Garden, indicating his middle and index fingers.'

As for His saying: ‘and do not chide the one who asks for help.’ (*ad-Duha*: 10), it means that he *peace and blessings be upon him* should not chide or reproach the one who asks him for food or money, given that he himself had been poor and needy. So, he *peace and blessings be upon him* should either feed the one who begs him or to gently and leniently refuse that without harming him/her. However, the word *Sa’l* does not necessarily refer only to the beggars. It is not confined to the material side, for it can refer to seeking knowledge, as some scholars maintain. In this regard, Al-Hasan Al-Basri said, ‘[This verse] is not about the beggar who comes to your house but rather about the seeker of knowledge.’<sup>(1)</sup> As Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* was given knowledge, he should not chide the one who seeks that knowledge until he understands the question and until the seeker of knowledge understands the answer. The Companions complied with this commanded to the extent that Abu Ad-Darda’ used to say to the seekers of knowledge, ‘Welcome! You are the lovers of Messenger Muhammad.’<sup>(2)</sup>

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘talk about the blessings of your Lord.’ (*ad-Duha*: 11) Allah’s Blessings are countless and innumerable; the Quran, Knowledge, wealth and provision are some of these Blessings. In this connection, Messenger Muhammad *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘When Allah *the Almighty* bestows a blessing on His servant, He loves to see the effect of this blessing on him/her.’<sup>(3)</sup> In the same connection, Al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali said, ‘[The blessing meant in this verse] is the righteous deed that a person does and then tells the trustworthy people about it so that they imitate and apply it.’<sup>(4)</sup> Taking about Allah’s Blessing should be through mentioning and thanking Him for them. So, one should thank and praise Him *Glorified is He* for these Blessings when s/he talks about them.

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(1) See *Al-Wahidi, At-Tafsir Al-Basit*, 24/116; *Ath-Tha’labi, Al-Kashf wa Al-Bayan*, 10/230; *Al-Baghawi, Ma’alim At-Tanzil*, 4/500; and *Ibn ‘Atiyya, Al-Muharrir Al-Wajiz*, 5/495.

(2) See *As-Sam‘ani, Tafsir*, 6/346; *Al-Qurtubi, Jame’ Ahkam Al-Quran*, 20/101; and *ibn Al-A‘rabi, Ahkam Al-Quran*, 4/410.

(3) See *Al-Quda’i, Musnad Ash-Shihab, Hadith no. 1102*.

(4) See *Mujahid, Tafsir*, 1/735.





the chapter of

***ash-Sharh***



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

**T**he chapter of *ash-Sharh* <sup>(1)</sup>.

أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ ۖ وَوَضَعْنَا عَنَّا وِزْرَكَ ۚ  
الَّذِي أَنتَقَضَ ظَهْرَكَ ۖ وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ ۚ

**Did We not relieve your heart for you [Prophet] [1]  
and remove the burden [2] that weighed so heavily on  
your back [3] and raise your reputation high? [4]  
(The Quran, *ash-Sharh*: 1-4)**

The word *Alam* (Did We not) is not pronounced like the disjointed letters *Alif-Lam-Mim* in the chapter of *al-Baqara* in which we pronounce the name of these letters. By contrast, in the chapter in question, we pronounce the sounds of these letters. This is also the case in His saying: ‘Do you [Prophet] not see how your Lord dealt with the army of the elephant?’ (*al-Fil*: 1) The difference in pronunciation is due to the fact that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard them as such from the Archangel Jibril (Gabriel). Learning the Quran depends of listening, for it is not allowed for someone to recite it except after listening to it so that one can differentiate

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(1) The chapter of *Ash-Sharh*, counting 8 verses and 27 words, is number 94 in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *Ad-Duha*, which precedes it in the order of the *Mushaf*. It completes the chapter of *Ad-Duha* to state that Allah *the Almighty* did not forsake or hate Messenger Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*, but rather, He *the Almighty* relieved his heart for him, removed his burden and raised his reputation high.

between the pronunciations of the words that are written with the same letters, as in the aforementioned case.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Did We not relieve your heart for you [Prophet].' (*ash-Sharh*: 1) constitutes a confirmatory interrogation meant for extracting the answer from the questioned person. The question needs an answer, and if the speaker gives the answer, then it could be questionable. However, if the addressee gives that answer, this represents his/her confirmation for the statement of the speaker. One may ask, 'Why does not Allah say, "Did we relieve your heart for you?"' He *the Almighty* does not employ that formula in order that the question does not allude to the answer. That is why a negative interrogation is employed here. He *the Almighty* relieved the heart of Messenger Muhammad, making it the place where the divine secrets and knowledge descend. This is his reward for fulfilling his mission.

He *peace and blessings be upon him* used to suffer the process of receiving the revelation because it was hard to him. However, when he became familiar with it and enjoyed the sweetness of receiving it, he forgot all the hardships. That is why when the revelation intermitted, she longed for its coming, even though it had been burdensome and tiring. So, Allah *the Almighty* wanted that the sweetness of what had been revealed to him remains, that his soul comes down and relax and that he longs for the coming of the revelation. Accordingly, when the revelation descends, he receives it eagerly, not paying attention to its hardships. He *peace and blessings be upon him* has a selected spiritual energy. The intermission of the revelation was meant in order that he get used to the difficulties accompanying the coming down of the Archangel. This ensures the elimination of the hardships and that the sweetness of what has been revealed remains.

Relieving the heart means that Allah *the Almighty* eliminates what pre-occupies Messenger Muhammad's heart, preventing him from realizing the truth. It also means to fill his heart with wisdom and knowledge so that he knows the reality of the matters, like the fact that the worldly life is fleeting and the Hereafter is everlasting. So, he preferred the everlasting life to the fleeting one. In this regard, he *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked, 'Can the heart be relieved?' Upon answering affirmatively, the people asked him, 'Are there distinctive signs for that?' He said, 'Yes; they are shunning the

deceiving life, paying attention to the eternal one and preparing for death before it takes place.’<sup>(1)</sup>

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘and remove the burden.’ (*ash-Sharh*: 2) The burden here is that which Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was bearing when the revelation descends on him. He *the Almighty* removed that burden, making it so light and easy. Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* used to hear the sound of ringing of the bell when the revelation would come. Afterwards, he sweats profusely and the weight of his body increases to the extent that if he was mounting a riding animal, it would be overburdened by his weight that its belly almost touches the ground. Further, if he *peace and blessings be upon him* was putting his knee on that of one of his Companions during the revelation, that Companion would be overburdened as Prophet Muhammad’s knee grew in weight. In this verse, it is as if Allah *the Almighty* says to him, ‘We have alleviated for you the burden of the Prophethood, the Message and the other affairs you are bearing.’ He *Glorified is He* then says: ‘that weighed so heavily on your back.’ (*ash-Sharh*: 3) This verse expresses the hardship and the heaviness of the revelation on him *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him*.

Here, arises a question, which is, ‘Why does Allah *the Almighty* mention the back specially?’ When something heavy is carried on the back, it produces a low sound. Some scholars maintain that the burden in this verse refers to the sins and the misdeeds that Allah *the Almighty* has forgiven him. However, what are the sins that he *peace and blessings be upon him* has committed, given that he has not prostrated to an idol, taken omens, buried a baby girl or treated a servant harshly. Thus, the burden here does not refer to the sins, but rather to the hardships of the revelation and its difficulties that used to affect Messenger Muhammad’s body causing him to sweat, shiver and fall unconscious. The Arabic word *Naqid* refers to collapsing and falling, a meaning which is clear in His saying: ‘...Then they found in it a wall which was on the point of falling, so he put it into a right state...’ (*al-Kahf*: 77). This means that the wall was about to fall and collapse. The ‘back’ is specially mentioned here

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(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Ibn Masu’d Allah be pleased with him. See Ibn Al-Mubarak, *Ar-Raqa’q*, Hadith no. 315, *Al-Hakim*, *Mustadrak*, Hadith no. 7863; and *Al-Bayhaqi*, *Shu’ab Al-Iman*, Hadith no. 10068.

because it bears most of the burdens. So, if the burden of the revelation was a tangible one, the sound of the overburdened back would be heard. Bearing the sins is mentioned in His saying: '...and they shall bear their burdens on their backs; now surely evil is that which they bear.' (*al-An'am*: 31) Normally, the heavy burdens are carried on the back and that is why it is specially mentioned. Similarly, earning is attributed to the hands, even though one can earn money through carrying objects on the back or shoulder.

As we have said, it is not befitting to attribute committing sins to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In fact, the burden that has been removed from him is the hardships and the difficulties of revelation that were so heavy on his back that they were about to break it. The Companions who sit with him *peace and blessings be upon him* used to recognise the effect of the revelation on him. Besides, they used to hear a sound like the buzzing of the bees when the Quran was being revealed to him. The revelation was a burdensome for him, as it is manifested in the fact that if he puts his thigh on one of his Companions during receiving the revelation, the latter feels that his thigh is as heavy as a mountain. Further, if the revelation descends while he is mounting his riding animal, it becomes overburdened and forcibly sits down. This fact is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Surely We will make to light upon you a weighty Word.' (*al-Muzzammil*: 5) This hardship was only removed after the intermission of the revelation, which causes him to eagerly yearn and waits for its coming. After the resumption of the revelation, the following saying of Allah *the Almighty* was revealed: 'Did We not relieve your heart for you [Prophet], [1] and remove the burden [2] that weighed so heavily on your back, [3] and raise your reputation high? [4]' (*ash-Sharh*: 1-4) These verses show that after the resumption of the revelation, he *peace and blessings be upon him* would undergo none of the hardships that he used to suffer.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'and raise your reputation high?' (*ash-Sharh*: 4) This matter is manifested in the fact that when He *the Almighty* is mentioned, he *peace and blessings be upon him* is also mentioned; as in the call to prayer, its establishing, *At-Tashahud* during the prayer, on Friday, on the pulpit, on the *Eid* of Breaking the Fasting, on the *Eid* of Sacrifice, on the Day of 'Arafat, the three days of *Tashriq*, throwing pebbles, on the mount on As-Safa and Al-Marwa, etc.

Raising Prophet Muhammad's reputation high could mean that it is obligatory that one believes in and obeys him in order to be a true believer in and obedient to Allah *the Almighty*. The mention of his name has spread to corners of the world. The one who ponders on this verse finds it amazing that the whole chapter was revealed in Mecca at the early time of revelation. In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* rules that Muhammad's reputation is raised high even before his Message overwhelms the rest of the religions and faiths. Through his Prophethood, his reputation was raised high. Further, his name is mentioned along with Allah's Name in the calling for prayer which was legislated in Medina after building the Mosque. So, the whole chapter gives the glad tidings that Islam would be victorious.

As Allah *the Almighty* raised his reputation high, He *Glorified is He* raised the reputation of his people through the Quran in which He *the Almighty* says: 'And most surely it is a reminder for you and your people...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 44). This verse means that the Quran is a great honour for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and His *ummah*, as it gives them a high reputation until the Day of Judgment. Likewise, He *Glorified is He* says: 'Certainly We have revealed to you a Book in which is your good remembrance...' (*al-Anbiya*': 10). This verse shows that the Arabs' honor, high reputation and history stem from the great rank and honor of the Quran, as He *Glorified is He* says: 'Sad, I swear by the Quran, full of admonition.' (*Sad*: 1) It is the Quran that gave the Arabs a great honor and reputation among the nations and removed their ignorance and low position. Allah *the Almighty* then says:

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ۖ إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿٥﴾

**So truly where there is hardship there is also ease [5]**

**truly where there is hardship there is also ease [6]**

**(The Quran, *ash-Sharh*: 5 - 6)**

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said about this verse, 'One type of hardship will not overwhelm two types of ease.'<sup>(1)</sup> This indicates that the hardship mentioned in this verse is one even though it is repeated, as it is definite. As the word ease is indefinite, its repetition indicates

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(1) See *Al-Bayhaqi, Shu'ab Al-Iman, Hadith no. 9541*.

that it is numerous. Allah *the Almighty* emphasizes His saying with the particle *Inn*, saying: 'So truly where there is hardship there is also ease; [5] truly where there is hardship there is also ease. [6]' (*ash-Sharh*: 5-6) Further, the particle *Ma'a* (with) is used to allude that ease does not come after the hardship but rather accompanies it. The hardship itself contains an aspect ease and it may prevent a greater hardship. So, ease could be in the heart of hardship and the hardship could be the true ease. This reassures anyone undergoing a hardship or a difficult time that however hard his/her the hardship is, the way out is near and it not difficult for Allah *the Almighty*. The more the situation straitens and gets dark, the faster the light that eliminates that darkness comes. In this regard, Ibn Mas'ud said, 'Even if the hardship is in a hole, the ease will pursue it until it gets that hardship out. Indeed, a hardship will not overwhelm two types of ease.' One may ask, 'Hardship and ease are antithetical, so how can there be ease with the hardship?' The particle *Ma'a* here indicates that ease comes quickly after the hardship as if they are accompanying each other. This particle could mean that the ease is mixed with the hardship, not meaning that they are accompanying or following each other.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَانصَبْ ۖ وَإِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَارْغَبْ ﴿٨﴾

**The moment you are freed [of one task] work on [7]  
and turn to your Lord for everything [8]  
(The Quran, *ash-Sharh*: 7 - 8)**

The Arabic word *Nasb* means tiredness and the word *Faragh* means finishing a task to carry out another. This verse is open to many interpretations and views. Now, what should Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* be freed of? What is the task that he should work on? Some scholars say that when he finishes the obligatory prayer, he should do extra acts of worship like offering supererogatory prayers, remembering Allah and invoking Him. However, prayer was not prescribed at the time of revealing this chapter, as it was prescribed during the Night Journey and Ascension, in the latest part of the Meccan period before immigrating to Medina. Some other scholars say that when he *peace and blessings be upon him* is freed of fighting in



the way of Allah, he should dedicate himself to other acts of worship like thanking Allah *the Almighty*. However, fighting had not been prescribed yet, for it was prescribed in the Medinan period. So, both of the previous views are incorrect.

Allah *the Almighty* charged Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with delivering the Message to his kinfolk, then to the people of Mecca, to the surrounding countries and to the whole world. For the sake of delivering this Message, he endured many hardships that distracted him from the rites that he used to practice at the cave of Hira'. When Archangel Jibril (Gabriel) was sent down with the revelation to him, he became pre-occupied with calling to Allah and delivering the Message. He *peace and blessings be upon him* underwent great hardship and difficulties in calling the people and Allah's instructions for Him were: 'So do not be harsh with the orphan [9] and do not chide the one who asks for help; [10] talk about the blessings of your Lord. [11]' (*ad-Duha*: 9-11) As, he *peace and blessings be upon him* was an orphan, he should not treat the orphans harshly, nor should he ignore a seeking of knowledge or a beggar. Further, he should tell the people about Allah's Way of Guidance and the Blessings of the Quran. As he would experience many hardships, he should know that: 'So truly where there is hardship there is also ease; [5] truly where there is hardship there is also ease. [6]' (*ash-Sharh*: 5-6) He *peace and blessings be upon him* relieved his heart for him, removed his burden and raised his reputation high. If he is freed of all of that, he should work on, dedicating himself to worshipping Allah *the Almighty*. One who cannot stand during prayer, s/he can pray while sitting or lying down. As standing is more tiring, He *Glorified is He* says: 'The moment you are freed [of one task] work on.' (*ash-Sharh*: 7)

Messenger Muhammad Allah's *peace and blessings be upon him*, used to offer *Qiyam Al-Layl* until his feet swell. When the Mother of the believers 'Aisha asked him, 'Why do you do this, while you have been forgiven of your former and latter sins?' he said, 'Should I not be a grateful slave of Allah?' The one who wants to achieve the supreme traits of dealing kindly with the orphan, encouraging people to feed the needy, attempting the steep way through emancipating the slaves, urging one another to steadfastness and compassion

and talking about Allah's Blessings - such person should pre-occupy him/herself with worship after being freed of the worldly affairs.

Tiredness during performing the acts of worship is not meant for itself, for the reason for them is: 'and turn to your Lord for everything.' (*ash-Sharh*: 8) This shows that the person should devout his/her intention to Allah *the Almighty* and proceeds to lovingly worship Him. S/he should be eager in his/her invocation and supplications. With regard to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the grounds for seeking to be close to Allah through worshipping him and seeking his reward are that He *the Almighty* relieved his heart with the light of the Message, removed the burdens of the revelation and alleviated its hardships and difficulties. Moreover, He *Glorified is He* safeguarded him against committing sins, strengthened him to bear the harm of the people, protected him from them and raised his reputation high in the worlds.

the chapter of

***at-Tin***



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

**T**he chapter of *at-Tin*<sup>(1)</sup> (The Fig).

وَالنِّينِ وَالزَّيْتُونِ ۝ وَطُورِ سِينِينَ ۝ وَهَٰذَا الْبَلَدِ الْأَمِينِ ۝

**By the fig, by the olive [1] by Mount Sinai [2]  
by this safe town [3] (The Quran, *at-Tin*: 1-3)**

Allah *the Almighty* set a special order for the Quran. We find six consecutive chapters starting with an Oath, which are chapter of *Al-Fajr*: ‘By the Daybreak, [1] by the Ten Nights, [2] by the even and the odd, [3] by the passing night. [4]’ (*al-Fajr*: 1-4); *Al-Balad*: ‘I swear by this city —[1] and you [Prophet] are an inhabitant of this city—[2] [I swear] by parent and offspring. [3]’ (*al-Balad*: 1-3); *ash-Shams*: ‘By the sun in its morning brightness [1] and by the moon as it follows it, [2] by the day as it displays the sun’s glory [3] and by the night as it conceals it, [4] by the sky and how He built it [5] and by the earth and how He spread it, [6] by the soul and how He formed it. [7]’ (*ash-Shams*: 1-7); *al-Layl*: ‘By the enshrouding night, [1] by the radiant day [2]’ (*al-Layl*: 1-2); and *Ad-Duha*: ‘By the morning brightness [1] and by the night when it grows still. [2]’ (*ad-Duha*: 1-2) The chapter of *ash-Sharh* follows these six chapters, but is it not starting with an Oath? It is as if it completes this set of chapters.

Afterwards, the chapter in question, *at-Tin*, starts with an Oath: ‘By the fig, by the olive, [1] by Mount Sinai, [2] by this safe town. [3]’ (*at-Tin*: 1-3)

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(1) The chapter of *At-Tin*, counting 8 verses and 34 words, is number 95 in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *Al-Buruj* and before that of *Quraysh*.

Here, Allah *the Almighty* swears by four things: two plants, the fig and olive; a mountain, which is Mount Sinai on which Allah *the Almighty* conversed with Prophet Musa (Moses); and a town which He made safe, namely the Mecca.

He *the Almighty* swears by two trees, saying: 'By the fig, by the olive.' (*at-Tin*: 1) Out of their great benefits, Allah *the Almighty* specially mentions them, apart from the rest of the trees. He *Glorified is He* mentions the olive in many places in the Quran along with other plants, trees and palm trees, as in His saying: 'He causes to grow for you thereby herbage, and the olives, and the palm trees, and the grapes, and of all the fruits; most surely there is a sign in this for a people who reflect.' (*an-Nahl*: 11) Then, He *the Almighty* specially speaks about the olive tree and its origin, saying: 'And a tree that grows out of Mount Sinai which produces oil and a condiment for those who eat.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 20) This tree produces oil which is also used as condiment eaten with bread. This is one of the most delicious kinds of food among those who grow olive trees in Sinai and Ash-Sham.

Further, Allah *the Almighty* sets the parable of His Light, saying: 'Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth; a likeness of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp, the lamp is in a glass, (and) the glass is as it were a brightly shining star, lit from a blessed olive-tree, neither eastern nor western, the oil whereof almost gives light though fire touch it not-- light upon light-- Allah guides to His light whom He pleases...' (*an-Nur*: 35). This is a lofty way of lighting the lamp by an extraordinary olive tree: '...neither eastern nor western...' (*an-Nur*: 34). The lighting oil, which reaches the climax of purity, stems from a blessed olive-tree: '...the oil whereof almost gives light though fire touches it not...' (*an-Nur*: 35). So, everything is self-lit. The oil is blessed and has no impurities; that is why it has a bright light. Moreover, we find it giving light by itself without being touch by the fire. It is light upon a light, including no spots of darkness. This is how Allah *the Almighty* gives light to the vast universe; there is no one dark spot therein, for everything is overwhelmed with His Light.

So, the tree is neither eastern nor western; it is not eastern because it is western and vice versa. It is eastern and western at the same time. How is this? The scholars say that this is because when the tree is in the east, the west

is shrouded in darkness, and when it is in the west, the east is shrouded in darkness as well. Accordingly, such a tree experiences periods of darkness and light. As for the tree mentioned in the aforementioned verse, it is neither eastern nor western; it is simultaneously eastern and western, not deprived of light. Here, taking an Oath by the fig and the olive is not simply because they are useful plants; rather, they remind the people about the place where Musa (Moses) *peace and blessings be upon him* received his Message and about Mount Sinai in which the Torah was sent down on him.

Then Allah *the Almighty* reminds us about Messenger Muhammad's Message when He swears, saying: 'by this safe town.' (*at-Tin*: 3) So, the oaths here are not merely taken by some trees as some people with surficial thinking maintain. They allude to the events that happened near these trees. They are not high trees to cover the events and the people rather they are medium in height. The Oaths here are taken by trees growing in that blessed spot of Sinai, even though they grow in other places like the mountains of *Ash-Sham*, Palestine, Jordon, etc. Despite that, He *the Almighty* defines the spot, saying: 'By the Mount of Sinai.' (*at-Tin*: 2)

Further, He *the Almighty* says to the Jews from among the people of the Book: 'And when We took a promise from you and lifted the mountain over you...' (*al-Baqara*: 63). He *the Almighty* lifted over them the mountain that exists in Sinai, saying to them, 'Accept the religious obligations otherwise We will smash you with the mountain.' In another verse, He *the Almighty* says about the same event: 'And when We shook the mountain over them as if it were a covering overhead and they thought that it was going to fall down upon them: Take hold of what We have given you with firmness...' (*al-A'raf*: 171). The Jews did not accept Allah's Way of Guidance except after the mountain was lifted over them.

The Mount Sinai is the mountain on which He *the Almighty* spoke to Musa (Moses); it is a blessed mountain and is filled with trees. Some scholars maintain that the word *Sinin* refers to the place where the mountain is located. In another verse, He *the Almighty* says: 'And a tree that grows out of Mount Sinai which produces oil and a condiment for those who eat.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 20) Regardless of whether the word *Sinin* is a description of the mountain or an

indication to its place, it is a blessed mountain located in a blessed area. Some exegetes, like Qatada, hold that *at-Tin* is the mountain where Damascus is located and Az-Zaytun is the mountain where the Sacred House in Palestine is located. As for Mount Sinai, it is a blessed, beautiful mountain in Ash-Sham. However, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And a tree that grows out of Mount Sinai...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 20) conclusively states that the intended mountain is that of At-Tur in Sinai.

As for the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'by this safe town.' (*at-Tin*: 3), it is an indication to Mecca which is the safe town which He *the Almighty* made secure due to Ibrahim's (Abraham) supplication. So, as *at-Tin* is a mountain in Damascus; Az-Zaytun is a mountain in the Sacred House that represents the Message of Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) and the Mount Sinai represents the Message of Musa (Moses), then the last Message is in the safe town of Mecca where the final Messenger was sent and the Message descended. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'And when Ibrahim said: My Lord, make it a secure town...' (*al-Baqara*: 126). Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* invoked Allah for safety and security twice; one in his saying: 'My Lord, make it a secure town...' (*al-Baqara*: 126) He *peace be upon him* invoked Him *the Almighty* to make Mecca a secure town that has all the requirements of life. This is a general supplication for safety.

The second invocation is found in Allah's saying: 'My Lord! Make this city secure...' (*Ibrahim*: 35). After Mecca has become safe, he invokes Him *Glorified is He* for more safety. This is a special safety, making it inviolable town where every man, animal, plant and even inanimate object is secured. He *Glorified is He* describes the Sacred House in Mecca, saying: 'In it are clear signs, the standing place of Ibrahim, and whoever enters it shall be secure...' (*Al-'Imran*: 97). So, in Mecca, every scared person who enters it feels secure. Further, He *the Almighty* relates that the people of Mecca said: '...If we follow the guidance with you, we shall be carried off from our country...' (*al-Qasas*: 57). However, He *the Almighty* then says to them: '...What! have We not settled them in a safe, sacred territory to which fruits of every kind shall be drawn? a sustenance from Us; but most of them do not know.' (*al-Qasas*: 57) Safety is attributed to the one who lives in that place, but Allah *the Almighty* attributes it



to the place itself. Thus, everything in that place is secure; the killer cannot be retaliated, the animals are not provoked or harmed, the plants are not cut and even the stone is secure in Mecca.

In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* shows His Grace on the people of Quraysh, saying: ‘who provides them with food to ward off hunger, safety to ward off fear.’ (*Quraysh*: 4) Here, He *the Almighty* clarifies that He provided them with all the fruits and grant them safety to ward off fear. This ensured that their caravans travel securely to the north and the south. So, He *the Almighty* bestowed abundant Blessings on them like providing them with food, warding off fear and harm and sustaining their mastery and high rank through serving the *Ka’ba*. He *the Almighty* made it a safe place for all the people. Safety and reassurance here include many things. He *the Almighty* made them feel safe from all kinds of fear like that of darkness, enemies and the dangers of the roads.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ ﴿٤﴾ ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِينَ ﴿٥﴾

**We create man in the finest state [4] then reduce him  
to the lowest of the low [5] (The Quran, *at-Tin*: 4 - 5)**

The Wise Quran is revealed from the Great Creator to the human being whom Allah *the Almighty* created along with all other creatures. Man’s creation should be one of the important topics that the Quran discusses, as s/he is the object of the Message. It should discuss man’s creation, fashioning, his/her last destination in the Hereafter and Monotheism. That is why He *the Almighty* says: ‘And certainly We created man of an extract of clay.’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 12); and ‘...certainly We created man of clay that gives forth sound, of black mud fashioned in shape.’ (*al-Hijr*: 26) These verses talk about the material formation and creation of the human being and the stages of that creation: ‘And certainly We created man of clay that gives forth sound, of black mud fashioned in shape.’ (*al-Hijr*: 26); and ‘And certainly We created man of an extract of clay, [12] Then We made him a small seed in a firm resting-place, [13] Then We made the seed a clot, then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We

caused it to grow into another creation, so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators. [14]' (*al-Mu'minun*: 12-14)

Man was created and formed from clay according to the shape that Allah *the Almighty* willed. Afterwards, this process was not repeated in the creation of all the human being. He *the Almighty* made their reproduction through: 'Then We made him a small seed in a firm resting-place.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 13) He *Glorified is He* made the human being comes from a sperm in the back of the man which he places in the womb of the women. He *the Almighty* made the womb the resting-place where the sperm settles firmly, as it clings to the uterine wall. Then He *the Almighty* changes the form of the sperm, making it grow into a clinging form, a lump of flesh and then bones garmented with flesh to grow into another creation. This is about the material creation of man.

As for his/her creation amidst the hardships and difficulties of the worldly life and his/her endeavour therein, Allah *the Almighty* says 'that We have created man for toil and trial.' (*al-Balad*: 4) Here, He *the Almighty* says: 'We create man in the finest state.' (*at-Tin*: 4) This verse could either refer to the material or the spiritual creation of man. The Originator perfected his/her creation in an upright form, the finest state and the most beautiful shape. This is because He *the Almighty* perfected his/her creation and He is the best of creators, creating out of nothing. Creating could be attributed to the people who share this attribute. However, when they create anything, it remains in the same state and does not grow, as in the case of the one who makes a glass cup out of sand. It remains in the same form; we cannot bring a male and a female cup to produce small cups. However, Allah *the Almighty* gives His creatures the secret of life to be able to reproduce and grow. Thus, He *the Almighty* is the best of creators.

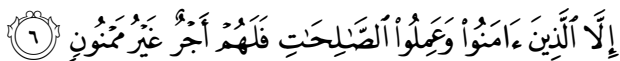
Allah *Glorified is He* does not strip the people of the attribute of creativity, providing or mercy, for they play part in some actions that befit their abilities as created servants - not to mention that their abilities are conferred on them by Him *the Almighty*. As for His Attributes, they are absolute and infinite in their aspect of Majesty, Perfection and Beauty, as He *the Almighty* says: 'nothing like a likeness of Him; and He is the Hearing, the Seeing.' (*ash-Shura*: 11); and: 'O man! What has beguiled you from your Lord, the Gracious One, [6]

Who created you, then made you complete, then made you symmetrical? [7] Into whatever form He pleased He constituted you. [8]' (*al-Infitar*: 6-8) Creating man in the finest state means forming him/her symmetrically in the suitable shape. So, the meaning of His saying: '...in the finest state.' (*at-Tin*: 4) is that He *the Almighty* perfected the creation of man; He shaped him/her in the best beautiful image, walking upright on two feet, unlike the animals that walk on four feet.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'then reduce him to the lowest of the low.' (*at-Tin*: 5) This means that man moves from one state to another until s/he ages, reaching the worst part of lifetime when s/he suffers weakness, senility, bending of the back and the absence of mind. His saying: 'We create man in the finest state [4] then reduce him to the lowest of the low. [5]' (*at-Tin*: 4-5) is the subject of the Oaths in His saying: 'By the fig, by the olive, [1] by Mount Sinai, [2] by this safe town. [3]' (*at-Tin*: 1-3)

Here arises a question, which is, 'Are the Angels not created in the finest state as well, while they are more beautiful than the human beings?' The Angels are created in the finest form according to what befits their creation and functions. The human beings are also created in the finest state if compared with the lower creatures. The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'then reduce him to the lowest of the low.' (*at-Tin*: 5) is open to many meanings. The one who reflects on this verse may wonder, 'Does the believer not age and suffer the symptoms of senility? Does this mean that the believer is reduced to the lowest of the low even though Allah *the Almighty* exempted those who believe and do good?' Another possible interpretation is that the finest state does not refer to the perfection of man's image and form, for there are creatures more beautiful and wonderful than him/her. Rather, it means that s/he was created while having the best value, mind, creed, nature and instinct. As for reduction to the lowest of the low, it is confined to the disbelievers, as the believers are exempted.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:



except those who believe and do good deeds — [6]  
(The Quran, *at-Tin*: 6)

Faith means that one's life is in harmony with what is in his/her heart according to Allah's Will and the Faith-based system. So, the good deeds stem from Faith. The saying of Allah, *the Almighty*: 'By the declining day, [1] man is [deep] in loss. [2]' (*al-'Asr*: 1-2) is similar to His saying here: 'then reduce him to the lowest of the low.' (*at-Tin*: 5) Both of the two verses are followed with His saying: 'Except those who believe and do good deeds...' (*at-Tin*: 6). Those who believe and do good deeds gather between Faith and the good deeds, the belief and the behaviour. Those people will have a good reward and recompense, as He *the Almighty* says: '...so goodly is the reward of the workers.' (*az-Zumar*: 74) Their reward is described here as unfailing because it is ceaseless and eternal.

The believer should make sure that his/her movement in life will yield reward from Allah *the Almighty*. For example, when s/he offers prayer, gives prescribed or optional alms, fasts, or performs Pilgrimage, s/he gets a reward. Every action s/he does in compliance with the Divine Way of Guidance will be recompensed with a reward doubled many times. His Bestowals in the Hereafter are different from the fleeting ones in the worldly life, for they are eternal and everlasting. So, the believer should be worried, for his/her reward is with his/her Lord Who says: 'Yes! Whoever submits himself entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good (to others) he has his reward from his Lord...' (*al-Baqara*: 112). As s/he gets his/her reward from his/her Lord, the believer should not be anxious, thinking that it may be forgotten or skipped. It is a reward with the One Who owns the worldly life and the Hereafter; He owns the possessors and their possessions. Further, the reward that those who believe and do righteous deeds get is unfailing and complete. When a believer ages and becomes sick, his/her good deeds that s/he used to do during his/her youth will continue to be recorded without any reduction.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

فَمَا يَكْذِبُكَ بَعْدَ بِالْدِّينِ ﴿٧﴾ أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَحْكَمَ الْحَاكِمِينَ ﴿٨﴾

**They will have an unfailing reward. After this, what makes you [man] deny the Judgment? [7] Is God not the most decisive of judges? [8] (The Quran, *at-Tin*: 7 - 8)**

Here, the address is directed to the man about whom Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘We create man in the finest state.’ (*at-Tin*: 4) He *Glorified is He* created man perfectly in the finest state and image. Further, He *the Almighty* sent many Messages to guide him/her like the Messages revealed in At-Tur Mountain in Sinai and in the secure town of Mecca in which the Sacred House is located. So, how can s/he deny the Day of Judgment after the verses and signs are clarified for him/her. The word *Din* (religion) here is definite, referring to the religion of Islam, as He *the Almighty* says: ‘Surely the (true) religion with Allah is Islam...’ (*Al-Imran*: 19). So, what makes man deny the religion of Islam?

Further, the word *Din* could refer to the Day of Judgment and also the law, as in His saying: ‘...it was not (lawful) that he should take his brother under the king's law unless Allah pleased...’ (*Yusuf*: 76). This means that Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) would not be able to take his brother according to the law of the king that was ruling Egypt. So, what makes man deny the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment? Allah’s Decree about the Day of Judgment is certainly true, for if there is no Resurrection, the creation would be in vain and purposeless. So, the Day of Judgment strikes a balance in the whole existence and ensures the sustenance of the right in Allah’s universe, protecting the weak and the wronged people. The existence of the Hereafter and the Recompense prevented the worldly life from turning into a lawless world where the strong attacks the weak and the wrongdoer harms the wronged one. That situation was also prevented by people’s recognition that Allah *the Almighty* is the Sovereign of the Day of Judgment and will hold them accountable.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘Is Allah not the most decisive of judges.’ (*at-Tin*: 8) The word *Alaysa* (is not) is a negative interrogation. In answer to that interrogation, we should say, ‘*Bala* (yes).’ In this way we affirm that no one is more decisive in judgment than Allah *the Almighty*. This style is also employed in His saying: ‘...Is not this the truth?...’ (*al-An‘am*: 30) He *the Almighty*

does not ask about the truthfulness of this fact, but rather affirms such truthfulness. He willed that they themselves affirm this fact, saying, 'Yes,' as their denial is useless in their situation. So, the particle *Bala* affirms a negative interrogation. He *the Almighty* is the most decisive of judges. If there is a plural description in which He *the Almighty* includes some of His servants, then it is attributed to them. With regard to Him *the Almighty* this Attribute is infinite, whereas people's attributes are changeable, fluctuating between strength and weakness.

So, His saying: 'Is Allah not the most decisive of judges.' (*at-Tin*: 8) means that He *Glorified is He* is the fairest of the just ones and the best One to judge. He judges between the believers and the deniers. Further, He *Glorified is He* is the most decisive of judges in everything He creates. This indicates His Omniscience, Wisdom and Majesty. Some scholars claim that this verse is abrogated by the following verse: 'So when the sacred months have passed away, then slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captives and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush, then if they repent and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, leave their way free to them; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.' (*at-Tawba*: 5) However, there is no contradiction between the two verses, for He *the Almighty* is the most decisive of judges from eternity and forever, before the existence of judges and judged people. Further, not every verse held to be abrogated by some scholars is really abrogated. In fact, most of the verses that these scholars claim it is abrogated by the aforementioned verse of the chapter of *at-Tawba*, which they call the verse of the sword, are not really abrogated if we reflected deeply on them. All these scholars' claims in this regard are refuted. When Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to recite: 'Is Allah not the most decisive of judges' (*at-Tin*: 8), he would say, 'Of course, and I am a witness to that.'

the chapter of

***al-'Alaq***





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

**T**he chapter of *al-‘Alaq* <sup>(1)</sup> (Clinging Form):

اَقْرَأْ بِاِسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ﴿١﴾ خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ﴿٢﴾  
اَقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْاَكْرَمُ ﴿٣﴾ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ﴿٤﴾ عَلَّمَ الْاِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ﴿٥﴾

**Read! In the name of your Lord who created [1] He created  
man from a clinging form [2] Read! Your Lord is the Most  
Bountiful One [3] who taught by [means of] the pen [4] who  
taught man what he did not know [5] (The Quran, *al-‘Alaq*: 1-5)**

These verses are the first Quranic ones to be revealed to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Although he was an illiterate Prophet, he is commanded in the first verse to read: ‘Read! In the name of your Lord who created’ (*al-‘Alaq*: 1) so, such reading is special, unlike the human being’s reading that depends on learning. He *peace and blessings be upon him* would read according to the Will of the Ultimate Causer that does not need the causal factors, for He *the Almighty* is the Creator of everything including the casual factors themselves.

The first thing that directs our attention in the creation of man is the clinging form: ‘He created man from a clinging form.’ (*al-‘Alaq*: 2) This is the first stage of man’s creation through reproduction. The origin of man was water, dust, mud and clay. So, why does the Quranic context skip talking

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(1) The chapter of *Al-‘Alaq*, counting 19 verses and 72 words, is number 96 in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca and is the first chapter to be revealed.

about that origin even though it is more indicative of Allah's Perfect Omnipotence? The scholars say that He *the Almighty* addresses the people by the way they understand and the process of reproduction that they witness. The overwhelming majority of the people did not witness the original creation of man from mud. On the contrary, they witness the process of reproduction through the sexual intercourse between a male and a female, making the sperm moves from men's back to woman's wombs. This perceivable process has been proven by the empirical sciences. By contrast, the first process of creation is beyond the empirical sciences and if He *the Almighty* had not told us about it, we would not have known anything about it. This proves that the experiment is related to the tangible matters that can be subjected to the empirical sciences. As for the unseen matters, they are not subjected to such sciences and could be only known through Allah's Report. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'I did not make them witnesses of the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor of the creation of their own souls; nor could I take those who lead (others) astray for aiders.' (*al-Kahf*: 51)

This verse refers to the original creation. As for the creation through reproduction, it is subjected to the empirical sciences. We can prove the truthfulness of the Quran with regard to the reproduction of the human beings. It states that the human being develops through many stages that start with the sperm and end with the complete creation of man. Allah *the Almighty* told us about this scientific fact before any scientist discovers it after the modern scientific advancement.

In the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One.' (*al-'Alaq*: 3) an intensified attribute of bountifulness is used. It is as if the bountiful teaches the one how to read through the causal factors. The Most Bountiful, however, is the One Who teaches him how to read without these causal factors. So, the Divine Attribute of Bountifulness is clear in the matter of reading. As for writing, He *the Almighty* says: 'who taught by [means of] the pen, [4] who taught man what he did not know. [5]' (*al-'Alaq*: 4-5) Here, the word 'man' refers to mankind in general and also the first human being, Adam. We have said that all the human knowledge is governed by premises leading to unquestionable conclusion hidden in the perceivable universe. We substantiate this fact by the series of the geometrical theories

whose proof depends on a previous theory. We say, for example, that the theory number 90 is substantiated by number 80 or 70 and so on. When we reach theory number one, we find that it is self-evident, all the people unanimously agree to it. Thus, the most complicated scientific theories are based on self-evident ones.

When Allah *the Almighty* taught man what he did not know, He *Glorified is He* left some basic, self-evident facts that the human mind can realize through reflection. For this reason, reflection on the universal phenomena is obligatory and heedlessness and turning away from these signs are prohibited. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'And how many a sign in the heavens and the earth which they pass by, yet they turn aside from it.' (*Yusuf*: 105) Every sign of creation in Allah's universe could lead to a theoretical conclusion if we reflected on it. This fact is evident in the human history of inventions and discoveries. The scientists who contributed to the welfare of the humanity reached the most complicated and important theories through attentive reflection.

Let us give an example to illustrate this matter; the theory of gravity and its sequential developments that served humanity was just a simple observation of Newton when he saw an apple falling on the earth. We all see the like of this scene. He, however, reflected on this movement and tried to conclude its reasons, wondering, 'Why did not it fall to the right or the left or go upwards?' Afterwards, he discovered the law of gravity that became one of the most important scientific facts. Thus, the most complicated theories are based on simple observation. For this reason, we find that the empirical science is based on observation and the experiment to reach the theory and then the scientific fact.

So, Allah *the Almighty*: 'who taught man what he did not know.' (*al-'Alaq*: 5) He *the Almighty* taught him/her through placing the knowledge within the universe so that the thinking minds can reach it. This is due to the fact that science is an interaction between the human mind and the material world. The subject of this interaction is the mind and its object is the matter. Thus, the universal phenomenon is the raw material of science. This is what He *the Almighty* taught the human being.

If we pondered on the learning human being, we find that the means of having knowledge are the same means of perception that He *Glorified is He*

created. The first means is the hearing because it is the most important means of perception and learning, given that the human being listens first and then utters what he had listened. For this reason, He *the Almighty* says: 'And Allah has brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers-- you did not know anything-- and He gave you hearing and sight and hearts that you may give thanks.' (*an-Nahl*: 78) As He *the Almighty* told us that man was brought forth from the womb of his/her mother while not knowing anything, then the means of knowledge and learning are the senses mentioned in the verse. Concluding the verse with taking about thanking Him alludes that the outcome of having hearing, sight, and heart necessitates thanking Him. This is because these senses lead to the knowledge that makes man happy and his/her affairs easy.

The one who reflects on these three senses finds that Allah *the Almighty* mentions them according to the natural order of their function in the body and importance as means of perception. Hearing and sight are the means of perceiving the tangible matters, which are the first things that man realises and learns. Afterwards, man learns, through the heart, the mental and abstract matters. The heart leads the person to the unquestionable principles and creeds that remain in his/her soul. We have previously clarified that hearing is the first sense to function after one's birth, as it starts automatically at that time. As for sight, it functions after three to ten days. Hearing is the sense that accompanies man all the time. Unlike the sense of sight, it does not stop during sleep, for it is the way of waking a sleeper up. Through hearing one can speak, as what has been heard by the ear is imitated by the tongue. Thus, the one who does not hear does not speak. For this reason, He *the Almighty* mentions two qualities of the disbelievers, saying: '...deaf and dumb...' (*al-Baqara*: 18). Therefore, deafness leads to dumbness.

With regard to the first human being, Adam, he received knowledge from Allah *the Almighty* through hearing first, a fact which is deduced from His saying: 'And He taught Adam all the names...' (*al-Baqara*: 31). When we follow the series of knowledge, we find one is taught by his/her father who was taught by his father and so on. When we reach in this series to Adam, we find that is it Allah *the Almighty* Who taught him. This is the meaning of His: 'who taught man what he did not know.' (*al-'Alaq*: 5)

Another possible interpretation is that He *Glorified is He* taught him through placing what helps him to have knowledge in the universe if he used his mind and intellectual abilities. The first human being does not have any of these abilities as he lacks the language that transmits knowledge. Thus, he should learn the language first. Allah *the Almighty* taught Adam the names of everything in the existence. Now, what is the reason for that? This is because the scholars divide the speech into nouns, verbs and prepositions. They define the noun as the word that has an independent meaning and time is not part of it. As for the verb, it is a word that has an independent meaning and time is part of it. With regard to the proposition, they define it as a word that does not have an independent meaning. It has a meaning only when it is mentioned along with another element and time is not part of it.

When we look at these kinds of speech, we find the noun is the most important kind and the origin of meanings. This is because the proposition is subordinate to it and the verb's root is a noun, for we use the noun of that verb to refer to it. For this reason, when we want to teach the children, we teach them the noun first and then the actions, the verbs and the prepositions. Thus, learning is based on knowing the names, as their meanings include the verb, the proposition and the letters.

Thus, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And He taught Adam all the names...' (*al-Baqara*: 31) indicates that He *Glorified is He* taught him what allows him to express himself and understand. This is why He *the Almighty* says in the chapter of *ar-Rahman*: 'He created man, [3] taught him the mode of expression. [4]' (*ar-Rahman*: 3-4) this means that He *the Almighty* taught him the understandable language he should use to express himself. In order that two people understand each other, they should be well aware of the meanings of the words. That is why the Arab person does not know or understand the English language and vice versa. Some people do not even some subtle meanings in their mother language.

After Adam was taught the name of everything, Allah *the Almighty* commanded him to teach his children: 'He said: O Adam! Inform them of their names...' (*al-Baqara*: 33). In this verse, we find that the 'O' is a proposition for calling; Adam is a noun; and 'inform' is an imperative. It is as if He *the Almighty* sets

the rule that the people should follow to learn the language. This matter solved a problem in the science of the language. Some people argued, 'If Allah *the Almighty* taught Adam all the names and he in his turn taught his children, the words of the language should not have increased more than what Adam was taught. Despite that, we find that the academies of the language endorse new words and add them to the language, like the names of the new discoveries and inventions.' We say that the existence of new words in the language proves that it is man-made and not divinely ordained. The people agree to use certain words like the sky, the earth, and the lamp, for example, to refer to certain meanings. However, this agreement needs mutual understanding through using a common language.

So, we ultimately would conclude that a Power has taught us. This directs our attention once again to His saying: 'And He taught Adam all the names...' (*al-Baqara*: 31). This is because the Creator provided the man with all the means of perception and their functions when He created him. He *the Almighty* enabled the eye to see, the ear to hear, the nose to smell, the skin to touch and the means of tasting to taste. Now, what is the function of the tongue? It is to utter the words. So, we should say that He *the Almighty* enabled the tongue to utter the words. These words form the language that the people use to understand each other. Further, they add the new words that match the new developments of life. Thus, we can say that the language was divinely ordained first and then became a man-made one.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنَّاظٍ ﴿٦﴾ إِنَّ رَأَاهُ أَسْتَفْهَى ﴿٧﴾ إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الرُّجْعَىٰ ﴿٨﴾

**But man exceeds all bounds [6] when he thinks he is  
self-sufficient [7] [Prophet], all will return to your Lord [8]  
(The Quran, *al-'Alaq*: 6 - 8)**

The Arabic word *Kalla* (Nay) is mentioned thirty-three times in the Quran, starting with the chapter of *Maryam*. It is a particle denoting reproach and determent. So, when one finds this particle, s/he should know that it is preceded by statements for which one should be reproached and against which s/he should be deterred. The clearest example to understand it is the

saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '[The nature of] man is that, when his Lord tries him through honour and blessings, he says, 'My Lord has honoured me,' [15] but when He tries him through the restriction of his provision, he says, 'My Lord has humiliated me.' [16]' (*al-Fajr*: 15-16) This is what man wrongly thinks; that is why Allah *the Almighty* reproaches him/her saying, 'No indeed!...' (*al-Fajr*: 17) This means that the abundance of provision and wealth is not a sign of honouring and the restriction of provision and poverty are not a sign of humiliation. Both of the two cases constitute a test and a trial and the honour is the reward of the one who passes the test in either case.

Back to the verses in question, He *the Almighty* says: 'But man exceeds all bounds [6] when he thinks he is self-sufficient. [7]' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7) Here, we do not find anything for which someone should be reproached. In this case, the scholars say that the word *Kalla* means 'indeed'. It is as if the verses confirm a factual reality: 'But man exceeds all bounds [6] when he thinks he is self-sufficient.' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7) They also say that the object of reproach and determent could be deduced from the context, as in the chapter of *al-Fajr* or in His saying here: 'But man exceeds all bounds.' (*al-'Alaq*: 6) According to this interpretation, the particle *Kalla* is employed for reproach and determent against man's reaction to the blessings mentioned at the beginning of the chapter: 'Read! In the name of your Lord who created: [1] He created man from a clinging form. [2] Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One [3] who taught by [means of] the pen, [4] who taught man what he did not know. [5]' (*al-'Alaq*: 1-5) These blessings entail thanking Allah *the Almighty* for them. However, man did not thank Him and that is why s/he is reproached for that action because it does not befit these blessings. He *the Almighty* gives his/her the blessings so that s/he thanks Him but s/he does not.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'But man exceeds all bounds [6] when he thinks he is self-sufficient.' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7) clarifies a factual reality and a nature in the human being. S/he exceeds the bounds when s/he thinks s/he is self-sufficient by his/her wealth, knowledge, etc. The meaning is that the human beings were allured by science away from Allah *the Almighty*. The more we advance in science the more we are allured by our intellectual abilities and, therefore, we go far away from Allah *Glorified is He* and His Way of Guidance. It

is noticeable that the scientifically advanced countries held sway over the sciences and the inventions, considering only the power of the mind. They no longer recognize or consider Allah's Omnipotence that created this universe.

Before the scientific revolution, the role of the mind was limited and it did not intervene greatly in people's lives. At that time, if water were cut off, the people could do nothing but to invoke Allah *the Almighty* for it. So, man was connected to his/her Lord. Now, when water is cut off, we do not invoke him *the Almighty* but rather search for the causal factors like a malfunction in the motor, the water tubing, the pipes, etc. No one pays attention to invoking Him *Glorified is He*. Thus, the more the mind holds sway over the human affairs, the more man goes far away from his/her Lord.

Naturally, man exceeds the limits when s/he thinks s/he is self-sufficient. This is the general rule from which no one is exempted except those protected by Allah *the Almighty*. Such people attribute the blessings they have to the Bestower of the Blessings, as in the story of Dawud (David) and Sulaiman (Solomon): 'certainly We gave knowledge to Dawud and Sulaiman, and they both said: Praise be to Allah, Who has made us to excel many of His believing servants.' (*an-Naml*: 14) In the same connection, Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* said: '...My Lord, enable me to be grateful for Your favour which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents...' (*an-Naml*: 19) He *peace be upon him* did not exceed the limits and was not allured by the rank of Prophethood, kingship, power and authority that no one else was given.

Further, in the chapter of *al-Kahf*, Allah *the Almighty* sets the parable of two people; one exceeds the limits on account of the blessings he has and, therefore, acts ungratefully to their Bestower. As for the second man, He *the Almighty* protects him and thus he attributes the blessings to their Bestower and shows gratitude to Him. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'And set forth to them a parable of two men; for one of them We made two gardens of grape vines, and We surrounded them both with palms, and in the midst of them We made cornfields. [32]... I do not think that this will ever perish [35] And I do not think the hour will come, and even if I am returned to my Lord I will most certainly find a returning place better than this. [36]' (*al-Kahf*: 32, 35-36) His friend said to him: '...Do you disbelieve in Him Who created you from dust,



then from a small seed, then He made you a perfect man? [37] But as for me, He, Allah, is my Lord, and I do not associate anyone with my Lord. [38] And wherefore did you not say when you entered your garden: It is as Allah has pleased, there is no power save in Allah? If you consider me to be inferior to you in wealth and children: [39] Then maybe my Lord will give me what is better...[40]' (*al-Kahf*: 37-40). He teaches his friend that the blessing should not distract him from the Bestower *Glorified is He*.

Thus, the flaw of the man is that the blessing makes him/her exceeds the limits and boasts about his/herself. S/he remains for a long time without having intimacy with his/her Lord. In the Book of Allah, there are many examples portraying the condition of those people. For example, He *the Almighty* relates that Qarun said: 'I have been given this only on account of the knowledge I have...' (*al-Qasas*: 78).

Further, He *the Almighty* tells us that man generally is fluctuating and ambivalent. When the cause of his/her haughtiness ends and one finds him/herself in a difficult time, s/he seeks refuge with Allah *the Almighty*. This is because s/he may deceive all the people but not him/herself. However, if Allah *the Almighty* relieved him/her from his calamity, s/he would return to his/her transgression. In this connection, He *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); and 'And when distress afflicts a man he calls upon his Lord turning to Him frequently; then when He makes him possess a favour from Him, he forgets that for which he called upon Him before, and sets up rivals to Allah...' (*az-Zumar*: 8). The word 'rivals' here refers to man's mind, acumen, smartness and intelligence. Moreover, He *the Almighty* says: 'So when harm afflicts a man he calls upon Us; then, when We give him a favour from Us, he says: I have been given it only by means of knowledge. Nay, it is a trial, but most of them do not know. [49] Those before them did say it indeed, but what they earned availed them not. [50]' (*az-Zumar*: 49-50)

When we review the stories of the Glorious Quran, we find that exceeding the limits was the reason why Allah *the Almighty* destroyed the previous

nations that had great civilisations. In this regard, He *Glorified is He* says: 'Have you [Prophet] considered how your Lord dealt with [the people] of 'Ad, [6] of Iram, [the city] of lofty pillars, [7] whose like has never been made in any land, [8] and the Thamud, who hewed into the rocks in the valley, [9] and the mighty and powerful Pharaoh? [10] All of them committed excesses in their lands, [11] and spread corruption there: [12] Your Lord let a scourge of punishment loose on them. [13] Your Lord is always watchful. [14]' (*al-Fajr*: 6-14)

Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Do you build on every height a monument? Vain is it that you do. And you make strong fortresses that perhaps you may. And when you lay hands (on men) you lay hands (like) tyrants.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 128-130) All these examples are categorised under His saying, 'But man exceeds all bounds when he thinks he is self-sufficient.' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7) These civilisations were devoid of values and not connected to Allah *the Almighty*. Rather, they were governed by deception and haughtiness and connected to the human abilities which are changeable. That is why the condition of those people changed and their civilisations perished. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'So each We punished for his sin...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40).

Allah *Glorified is He* then says, '[Prophet], to your Lord, all will return.' (*al-'Alaq*: 8) This verse denotes that those who exceed the bounds should not think they escaped from Him, due to their fake self-sufficiency. However long their transgression remains, they inevitably will return to Allah *Glorified is He*. The prepositional phrase 'to your Lord' is foregrounded to indicate that they will return to Him, Alone. It is Allah *the Almighty* Who created them and to Whom is their inescapable return. This return entails holding them accountable and their going to either paradise or Hellfire. So, we should pay attention to the fact that the good that leads to the Hellfire is not really good and the evil that leads to the paradise is not really evil.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يَنْهَى ۙ عَبْدًا إِذَا صَلَّى ۚ ۝۹ أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَانَ عَلَى الْهُدَىٰ ۝۱۰ أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ۝۱۲ أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ۝۱۳ أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ۝۱۴

**Have you seen the man who forbids [9] [Our] servant to pray? [10] Have you seen whether he is rightly guided [11] or encourages true piety? [12] Have you seen whether he denies the truth and turns away from it? [13] Does he not realize that God sees all? [14] (The Quran, *al-'Alaq*: 9 - 14)**

When you read ‘Have you seen?’ you should realise that it is followed by a wondrous matter. As we colloquially say, ‘Have you seen what so and so did?’ This indicates that he has done something unusual. The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Have you seen the man who forbids [Our] servant to pray?’ (*al-'Alaq*: 9-10), is preceded by His saying, ‘But man exceeds all bounds when he thinks he is self-sufficient.’ (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7) It is as if the former saying is the grounds for ruling that man exceeds the bounds. These verses were revealed in reference to Abu Jahl who forbade Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from offering prayer and warned him against offering it.<sup>(1)</sup> This is the highest level of exceeding the bounds on the part of Abu Jahl. He is free to disobey Messenger Muhammad’s command to offer prayer but he overstepped the limits by forbidding someone else from offering it. Moreover, he does not forbid a normal person but rather Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who was charged with calling the people and urging them to offer prayer. Thus, exceeding the bounds in this incident is multifaceted. That is why the Quran considers this incident a wondrous matter that should not happen to the Caller to Islam *peace and blessings be upon him*.

The address in these verses is directed at one time to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and to Abu Jahl in another time. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* judges between two disputing parties. Allah *Glorified is He* addresses him *peace and blessings be upon him* in the way that befits him,

(1) In this regard, Qatada narrated that Abu Jahl said, ‘If I see Muhammad offering prayer, I will trample on his neck.’ Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘There is a Pharaoh for every nation, and Abu Jahl is the Pharaoh of this nation.’ See *At-Tabari, Jame' Al-Bayan*, 24/534.

saying, 'Have you seen the man who forbids [Our] servant to pray?' (*al-'Alaq: 9-10*) These verses were revealed after the incident of forbidding him *peace and blessings be upon him* from offering prayer. Abu Jahl went to carry out his threat of trampling on Messenger Muhammad's head while he was praying. Suddenly, he was taken back and returned when he saw some of Allah's forces. The people asked him, 'What is the matter with you?' He said, 'I found a trench between me and him, and saw creatures with wings that would seize me if I approached him.' When this incident was reported to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he said, 'By Allah, if he had proceeded, the stern Angels would have seized him.'<sup>(1)</sup>

This incident has already happened. Even though the Quran relates it after its occurrence, it does not employ a past verb but rather uses the verb 'to forbid' in the present form. This is meant in order that we recall the incident as if we are watching it. Afterwards, the address is directed to the forbidders, Abu Jahl: 'Have you seen whether he is rightly guided, or encourages true piety?' (*al-'Alaq: 11-12*) Then it is directed to Messenger Muhammad: 'Have you seen whether he denies the truth and turns away from it? Does he not realise that Allah sees all?' (*al-'Alaq: 14*)

Another possible interpretation is that the address in all the verses is directed to Abu Jahl. Now, how can we attribute to him the descriptions in Allah's saying, 'Have you seen whether he is rightly guided, or encourages true piety? Have you seen whether he denies the truth and turns away from it?' (*al-'Alaq: 11-13*) The scholars say that Abu Jahl claimed he is rightly guided but in reality, he denied Messenger Muhammad's call and turned away from guidance. So, the first two verses refer to his claims and the third one refers to the reality of his situation.

Regarding His saying, 'Have you seen the man who forbids [Our] servant to pray?' (*al-'Alaq: 10-11*), there are many wonderful incidents related to it. It is narrated that when 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* was waiting

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 8831; Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 9775; Ibn Hibban, Sahih, Hadith no. 6571; Abu Ya'la, Musnad, Hadith no. 6207; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 38/2797.*

for the *Eid* Prayer, he saw some people praying. When some of his Companions asked him, ‘Should you not forbid them from doing that (praying before the due time)?’ he replied, ‘I will not forbid them from offering prayer. I will just tell them that Messenger Muhammad did not offer prayer at that time, lest I would be addressed by the verse: ‘Have you seen the man who forbids [Our] servant to pray?’ (*al-'Alaq*: 10-11)<sup>(1)</sup> Now, are these verses specially referring to the incident of Abu Jahl with Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or are they generally applicable to anyone forbidding prayer? The maxim here is that the consideration is given to the generality of the wording and not the specificity of the cause of revelation. Accordingly, anyone who forbids, prevents or distracts the people from prayer is addressed by the verses.

The verses in question are concluded by the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Does he not realise that Allah sees all?’ (*al-'Alaq*: 14) As Allah *the Almighty* sees everything, He does not need any proof or witness. A witness can be voluntarily offered, as in His saying, ‘And they shall say to their skins, “Why have you borne witness against us?”’ (*Fussilat*: 21)

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

كَلَّا لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَنْتَهِ لَنَسْفَعًا بِالنَّاصِيَةِ ۖ (١٥) نَاصِيَةٍ كَذِبَةٍ خَاطِئَةٍ (١٦)  
فَلْيَدْعُ نَادِيَهُ. (١٧) سَنَدْعُ الزَّبَانِيَةَ (١٨) كَلَّا لَا تُطِعْهُ وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ (١٩)

**No! If he does not stop, We shall drag him by his forehead — [15] his lying, sinful forehead [16] Let him summon his comrades [17] We shall summon the guards of Hell [18] No! Do not obey him [Prophet]: bow down in worship and draw close [19] (The Quran, *al-'Alaq*: 15 -19)**

His saying ‘No!’ represents a reproach and deterrent against Abu Jahl’s action of denying the truth and forbidding Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from offering prayer. So, His saying, ‘... If he does not stop, We shall drag him by his forehead.’ (*al-'Alaq*: 15) means that if he did not stop his evil deeds, Allah *Glorified is He* would drag him by the forehead as

(1) See *Ar-Razi, Mafatih Al-Ghayb*, 32/222; *Gharai`b Al-Quran*, 6/532; and *Al-Maraghi, Tafsir*, 30/203.

a mark of humiliation and disgrace. He had a forelock which he used to comb and perfume. So, Allah *the Almighty* decreed that he would be dragged by his forelock that he boasted about. His forehead is metaphorically described as: 'his lying, sinful forehead.' (*al-'Alaq*: 16). As it is Allah *the Almighty* Who threatens him, His Threat will inevitably come to pass. Were this not the case, some people would doubt His Words. In reality, Abu Jahl did not stop his harm to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and kept on denying the Message. Thus, his fall was at the Battle of Badr.

The books of Messenger Muhammad's biography record that when the chapter of *Ar-Rahman* was revealed, he *peace and blessings be upon him* said to his companions, 'Who among you can recite it to the people of Quraysh?'(1) 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud stood up and took it upon himself to fulfil this task. He was very thin and had a small body. So, he *peace and blessings be upon him* kept silent and repeated the question. When 'Abdullah said to him, 'O Messenger of Allah, I can carry out this task', he approved that. There is Divine Wisdom in the fact that the thinnest and the smallest one among the Companions carried out this mission. He proved that even though he has a thin body, he held a firm belief. He went to the people of Quraysh in the place of their gathering and recited the chapter of *ar-Rahman* to them, enduring beating and insults. Abu Jahl severely harmed him and slapped him, cutting his ear and causing him to bleed. When he returned to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in that condition, he, i.e. Messenger Muhammad felt deeply sad for him. Thereupon, Archangel Gabriel came to him smiling. He *peace and blessings be upon him* asked him, 'My brother Gabriel, what makes you laugh?' He said, 'You will come to know.'

After the revelation of '... If he does not stop, We shall drag him by his forehead' (*al-'Alaq*: 15), Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was waiting for what would happen to Abu Jahl. That is why he is the only

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(1) *It is narrated that Az-Zubayr said, 'The first one to recite the Quran openly after Messenger Muhammad was 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud. The Companions of Messenger Muhammad said, 'By Allah, the people of Quraysh have never listened to the Quran openly. Who can recite it to them openly?' Ibn Mas'ud said, 'I can do that.' See Ahmad, Fada'il As-Sahaba, 1535; Ibn Hisham, As-Sira An-Nabawiyya, 1/314; and As-Suhayli, Ar-Rawd Al-Unuf, 3/108.*

disbeliever about whom he *peace and blessings be upon him* said at the Battle of Badr, 'Look for Abu Jahl.'<sup>(1)</sup> This is because Allah *the Almighty* promised, as Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* reported, to take revenge against him. Indeed, Ibn Mas'ud found him in his last breath after he was struck by two young boys. Ibn Mas'ud stood on his chest to finish him but his sword did not cut. So, Abu Jahl gave him his sword to finish him and relieve him of the pain. Amazingly, Abu Jahl said to him in this situation, while Ibn Mas'ud was standing on his chest, 'O shepherd, you have climbed a difficult spot.' Thereupon, Ibn Mas'ud finished him, separating his head from his body. He wanted to take his head to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. So, he pierced the ear and tied it with a rope, dragging the head to him *peace and blessings be upon him*. When he *peace and blessings be upon him* saw this, he said, 'An ear for an ear and the head is an addition.'<sup>(2)</sup>

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Let him summon his comrades; We shall summon the guards of Hell.' (*al-'Alaq*: 17-18), the word 'comrades' refers to Abu Jahl's family, kinfolk and children in their big number he used to take pride during his dispute with Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Abu Jahl said to him, 'How do you threaten me while I am the richest person in this valley and has the biggest number of children.' So, Allah *the Almighty* responded to him, saying, 'Let him summon his comrades; We shall summon the guards of Hell.' (*al-'Alaq*: 17-18) Allah *the Almighty* will summon the Angels of Punishment who are in charge of dragging him to the hellfire. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* says to Abu Jahl, 'You will come to know who really have a great power and stronger forces.'

Allah *the Almighty* concludes the chapter with His saying, 'No! Do not obey him [Prophet]: bow down in worship and draw close.' (*al-'Alaq*: 19) Here, Allah *the Almighty* commands Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* not to obey Abu Jahl's prohibition of prayer and to offer it. The

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(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 3962 and 4020; Al-Bayhaqi, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra, Hadith no. 18165.*

(2) It is narrated that Abu Jahl told Ibn Mas'ud, 'O shepherd, you have climbed a difficult spot.' Ibn Mas'ud then cut his head and brought it to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, 'O, Messenger Muhammad, this is the head of Allah's enemy.' See *Al-Waqidi, Al-Maghazi, 1/90; and Ibn Hisham, As-Sira An-Nabawiyya, 1/636.*

best part of the prayer and the nearest to Allah *the Almighty* is prostration, as he *peace and blessings be upon him* said ‘A slave becomes nearest to his Lord when he is in prostration.’<sup>(1)</sup> Abu Jahl wanted him *peace and blessings be upon him* to go far away from Allah while Allah *the Almighty* wanted him to draw close.

The prayer represents a presence before Allah, and prostration gives the servant the rank of closeness. This is enough honour and position for the sake of which all the hardships are considered easy. As prayer has this high position and rank, Allah *the Almighty* prescribed it on Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the most honourable place, namely the seventh heaven during the Night Journey and Ascension.

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 215/482; Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 9461; Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 1524 and 8958; Ibn Hibban, Sahih, Hadith no. 1928.*



the chapter of

***al-Qadr***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Qadr*<sup>(1)</sup> (The Glory).

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ ﴿١﴾ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ ﴿٢﴾

**We sent it down on the Night of Glory [1]  
What will explain to you what that Night of Glory is? [2]  
(The Quran, *al-Qadr*: 1 - 2)**

First, we notice the harmonious relationship between the context of the chapter of *al-Qadr* and *al-'Alaq*. As a matter of fact, the order of the chapters in the *Mushaf* is different from that of revelation, as the Quran was revealed according to the incidents that require certain rulings. The relationship between the revealed verses and the incident connected to them is understandable; when an incident takes place, its ruling is revealed. This is more confirmatory to the ruling; it takes a firm position in the soul as it requires that ruling and is prepared to receive it. If the ruling is prescribed without any need for it, man may forget the application of that ruling when there is a need for it. However, when the revelation of the ruling follows the existence of the need directly, it is established in the heart, as the soul direly needs it.

The Quran has a special order according to its preservation in the Preserved Tablet. There is a harmonious relationship between the verses and the chapters in the order of revelation. Now, is this relationship not found in

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(1) The chapter of *Al-Qadr* consists of five verses, 30 words and 114 letters. It is the 97<sup>th</sup> chapter in the order of *Al-Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *'Abasa* and before that of *Ash-Shams*.

the order of the *Mushaf*? No; there is a harmonious relationship between the verses and the chapters even if they are located in a place inconsistent with their order of revelation. Thus, there is a harmonious relationship between the chapters and the verses with regard to their written order in the *Mushaf* as well as in their order of revelation. If we look at the chapter of *al-Qadr*, we find that its order is after *al-'Alaq*. This is because the chapter of *al-'Alaq* did not define what should be read. What was required at the time of revealing it was affecting the ability to read for the illiterate person, i.e. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. That is why the object of reading was skipped and he was only commanded to read: 'Read! In the name of your Lord who created' (*ash-Sharh*: 1).

Now, what should he read? Evidently, he should read the Quran. For this reason, we find that Allah *the Almighty* does not say in the chapter of *al-Qadr*, 'We sent down the Quran on the night of Glory', as a new statement. Rather, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'We sent it down on the Night of Glory' (*al-Qadr*: 1) employing the third person to refer to the Quran. The third person, as we have said, requires a reference. So, what is commanded to be read is known, that is, the Quran. Therefore, there is a clear harmonious relationship between the chapter of *al-'Alaq* and *al-Qadr*; they share the same context.

Allah *the Almighty* starts the chapter of *al-Qadr* with His saying, 'We sent it down ...' (*al-Qadr*: 1). Allah *Glorified is He* does not say, 'I sent it down', but rather employs the plural pronoun that indicates glorification. When we review the usage of this plural pronoun in the Book of Allah, we find that it is used in the actions that require a set of Allah's Attributes of Majesty and Beauty. For example, when Allah *the Almighty* creates something, some Attributes are used like Omniscience, Omnipotence, Wisdom, etc. These numerous Attributes cooperate, with their Majesty and Beauty, to create that thing. In the like of these actions, Allah *the Almighty* uses the plural pronoun 'We'.

By contrast, when Allah *Glorified is He* talks about Himself to make His servants return to Him, He does not say, 'We are Allah'. Rather, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Surely, I am Allah, there is no god but I...' (*al-Hajj*: 14). Here, He uses a singular pronoun to command His servants to worship Him. On the other hand, when He shows His Blessings, He uses the plural pronoun

because the Blessings are numerous and require the cooperation of many Attributes, as we have said. For this reason, if we review the Quran in the light of this remark, we find that the pronoun is singular in the case of talking about His Oneness but plural in the case of showing His Blessings on us. In the latter case, He would say, 'We decreed and We sent down'.

If we carefully reflect on His saying, 'We sent it down ...' (*al-Qadr*: 1), we find that the root *nazal* regarding the Quran has many derivatives like *nazala* (to descend), *naz-zala* (to reveal), *unzila* (to be sent down), *nuz-zila* (to be revealed) and *tatanazzal* (to gradually descend). We notice in these derivatives that the intransitive verb '*nazala*' (to descend) is attributed to the Quran and to Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And with truth have We revealed it, and with truth did it come...' (*al-Hijr*: 105), and 'The Faithful Spirit has descended with it.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 193) The first verse refers to the Quran and the second refers to Archangel Gabriel. In the first verse, Allah *the Almighty* does not mention the one who brought the Quran down, but in the second verse Allah *Glorified is He* mentions that person, namely Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*. Consequently, this means that the Quran descended with Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*. In this sense, we can say that the Quran was revealed with and without an intermediary. The rhetorical indication in this fact is that the situation will not differ if the Quran descended by itself or through an intermediary. That is to say, that as the one who brought it down is a Faithful Spirit who can never alter it, then it is as if the Quran descended by itself. So, in the process of revealing the Quran, it was not altered as though it descended by itself without an intermediary. Thus, the two aforementioned verses denote the same meaning but we deduce from them that the matter is the same whether the Quran was revealed by itself or through an intermediary. This is because the Spirit that brought it down is faithful, changing nothing in its content. After all, he did not voluntarily bring it down, for he was commanded by Allah *the Almighty*.

One of the derivatives is the verb *naz-zala* (to reveal), which is employed in His saying, 'He has revealed to you the Book with truth ...' (*Al-Imran*: 3). Here, the verb is attributed to Allah *the Almighty* and the Quran is the object of the verb. Further, another verse shows the difference between the revelation of the Quran and that of the previous Books, which is His saying, 'And it is a

Quran which We have revealed in portions so that you may read it to the people by slow degrees, and We have revealed it, revealing in portions.' (*al-Isra'*: 106) The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...by slow degrees...' (*al-Isra'*: 106), proves that the Quran was revealed in portions. Whenever an incident arises, its ruling is revealed. That is why Allah *the Almighty* relates that the disbelievers said, '... Why has not the Quran been revealed to him all at once?' (*al-Furqan*: 32) This means that the previous Books were revealed at once. By contrast, the Quran was revealed in portions according to the incidents to strengthen the heart of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. If it had been revealed at once, his heart would have been strengthened only one time. As he will confront many incidents during his call, his heart should be frequently strengthened: '... Thus, that We may strengthen your heart by it and We have arranged it well in arranging.' (*al-Furqan*: 32) Therefore, regarding the way of revelation, the Quran is different from the previous Books.

The Quran is a Book whose recitation is an act of worship and it is easy for the tongues to recite every portion thereof: '... and We have arranged it well in arranging. And they shall not bring to you any argument, but We have brought to you (one) with truth and best in significance.' (*al-Furqan*: 32-33) As they shall not bring any argument except that the Quran brings the truth about it, then it is as if their arguments are one of the reasons why the Quran is revealed. If it had been revealed at once, how would the people ask about something and the Quran clarifies it to them? How would they ask about their problems that the Quran descends to solve? Thus, the ruling about a certain matter should not descend until the people ask about it.

As for the derivative *naz-zala* it is a transitive verb denoting the repetition of the action of sending down the Quran. The root *anzala* is another transitive verb but it was only attributed to Allah *the Almighty* directly. It is not attributed to Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*. This indicates that *anzala* is the root from which the derivatives *naz-zala* and *nazala* were derived. This root also indicates the original revelation of the Quran, transmitting it from the unseen world to the seen one.

The Quran is an eternal Attribute of Allah *the Almighty* and was in the unseen world. Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* willed to bring it out to the

seen world, as the unseen world could be witnessed by some creatures but not others. When Allah *the Almighty* commanded the pen to write in the Preserved Tablet, He brought the Quran out of the unseen world to the seen one. Consequently, it became seen to the Scribing Angels but unseen to Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*. Afterwards, the Scribing Angels brought it down to Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* making it perceivable to him but it was still unseen to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. After Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* brought it down to Messenger Muhammad's heart, it became seen to him but unseen to the human beings. Finally, when he *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed it to his *ummah*, it became absolutely perceivable in the seen world.

Thus, there are stages in the revelation of the Quran. When Allah *the Almighty* uses the verb *anzala* (to reveal), He refers to the original revelation from the unseen world to the seen one according to the aforementioned stages. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And when it is said to them, "Come to what Allah has revealed (*anzala*) and to the Messenger", they say, "That on which we found our fathers is sufficient for us..."' (*al-Ma'ida*: 104). Here the action of revealing the Quran is connected with the last stage of conveying it to the seen world through Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Consequently, we should accept the Quran as if it was revealed directly from Allah *the Almighty* without an intermediary. We should recognise that when we listen to the Quran, we are listening to Allah *the Almighty* speak - we should disregard all the intermediaries. We should not say it the Quran that Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* or the Scribing Angels had sent down; rather, we should say it is Allah *the Almighty* Who originally sent it down. That is why the people who taste the sweetness of the Quran do not say, 'We recite the Quran'; rather, they say, 'We listen to the Quran'. This means that they are in fact listening to Allah *the Almighty* speak.

In this connection, Ja'far As-Sadiq<sup>(1)</sup> *Allah be pleased with him* was the most knowledgeable person of his time about the secrets of the Quran. He

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(1) Ja'far As-Sadiq is Ja'far ibn Mohammed, Al-Baqir, ibn 'Ali, Zayn Al-'Abidin, Abu 'Abdullah. He was one of the prominent followers from whom Abu Hanifa and Malik received knowledge. He was born in 80 A.H. and died in 148 A. H. when he was 68 years old.

prescribed the spiritual cure for the human soul when it is afflicted by anxiety or fear, for example. Fear is to be scared from something known while anxiety is to fear something unknown. He said, 'I'm surprised that the fearful person does not seek refuge in Allah's saying, "... Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector.'" for I listened to Allah *the Almighty* say afterwards: "So they returned with favour from Allah and (His) Grace, no evil touched them ..."' Ja'far did not say, 'I recited', but rather, 'I listened to Allah say.'

He then added, 'I am surprised that the grieved person does not seek refuge in Allah's saying, "... There is no god but Thou, Glory be to Thee; surely, I am of those who make themselves to suffer loss.'" for I listened to Allah say afterwards: "So We responded to him and delivered him from the grief and thus do We deliver the believers.'"

He then said, 'I am surprised that the one against whom the plots have been devised does not seek refuge in Allah's saying, "... I entrust my affair to Allah; Surely Allah sees the servants.'" for I listened to Allah say afterwards: "So Allah protected him from the evil (consequences) of what they planned...."

Furthermore, he said, 'I am surprised that the one who seeks the worldly life and its adornment does not seek refuge in Allah's saying, "... It is as Allah has pleased, there is no power save in Allah ..."' for I listened to Allah say afterwards: "... If you consider me to be inferior to you in wealth and children, then maybe my Lord will give me what is better than your garden...."

Before we leave our discussion of this point, we should notice one of the wonderful remarks of the Quran. We should first reflect on the indications of the following two verses which are close in meaning: 'And when it is said to them, "Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger", they say, "That on which we found our fathers is sufficient for us..."' (*al-Ma'ida*: 104), and, 'And when it is said to them, "Follow what Allah has revealed", they say, "Nay! We follow what we found our fathers upon ..."' (*al-Baqara*: 170). We find that the first verse indicates that those disbelieving people are more stubborn in rejecting the true Way of Guidance than the people in the second verse. This is because they said that following their fathers was sufficient for them, blocking all the means of allowing guidance to enter their hearts. This meaning is not mentioned in the second verse, giving hope that they may be guided.



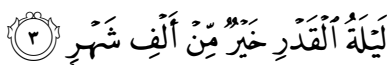
Further, if we reflected on the conclusion of each of the two verses, we find that it befits the meaning of each verse. As the first verse talks about a strongly denying people, it is concluded with His saying, ‘What! Even though their fathers knew nothing and did not follow the right way.’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 104) By contrast, the second verse is concluded with His saying, ‘... What! and though their fathers had no sense at all, nor did they follow the right way.’ (*al-Baqara*: 170) When they claimed that following their fathers is sufficient for them, Allah *the Almighty* negated that they have any knowledge. The knowledge one has is more than what he perceives through his mind. One can know what he does not perceive with his mind when someone else tells them about it. So, one’s source of knowledge is what he perceives with his mind in addition to what he knows through people’s reasoning. Negating knowledge in the first verse includes what they could know by themselves and from other people.

Back to the chapter in question! Regarding the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘We sent it down on the Night of Glory ...’ (*al-Qadr*: 1), the Arabic word *qadr* (glory) has a specific linguistic connotation. However, this general linguistic connotation does not fulfil its due meaning and position meant by Allah *the Almighty*. That is why Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘What will explain to you what that Night of Glory is?’ (*al-Qadr*: 2) The addressee here is Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who is the most knowledgeable person about the language. So, this indicates that the position of this night is beyond the human perception. If Allah *the Almighty* did not show us its position, we would not come to know it through our intellectual abilities. Thus, the word *qadr* bears a meaning beyond its linguistic connotations. Regarding its linguistic connotation, it is known to the Arabs who listen to the Quran, that is, to the Night of Glory, that the Night is the night of greatness, honour, and high rank. We should not stop at these meanings, for this night has additional meanings, Quranic illuminations and Divine Lights transcending the linguistic connotation.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘What will explain to you what that Night of Glory is?’ (*al-Qadr*: 2) This means that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* should receive the knowledge about this night from Allah *the Almighty* as He knows what we do not perceive concerning it. The style

‘What will explain’, which is used in this verse, is only employed regarding the matters that the addressee cannot perceive through his mind or language. We have previously clarified that the style ‘What will explain’ is different from ‘what will make you comprehend’. The former means that Allah *the Almighty* would explain to Messenger Muhammad the reality of a given matter, while the latter means that Allah *the Almighty* would not explain a certain matter to him. So, when Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘... what will make you comprehend that the hour may be nigh.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 63), this negates that Allah *the Almighty* will make him comprehend the time of the Hour either in the present or the future. This matter remains unseen, as one of Allah’s secrets.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:



**The Night of Glory is better than a thousand months [3] (The Quran, *al-Qadr*: 3)**

It is well known that the calendar of the day depends on the movement of the sun and the calendar of the month depends on the movement of the moon. Therefore, the twelve circulations of the moon constitute one year. Accordingly, we can understand His saying, ‘The Night of Glory is better than a thousand months. (*al-Qadr*: 3) in the light of His saying, ‘The month of *Ramadan* is that in which the Quran was revealed ...’ (*al-Baqara*: 185). We can define the position of the Night of Glory according to the number of the months. The one thousand months include eighty-three months of *Ramadan*. Thus, the meaning is that this Night is better than one thousand months not including the Night of Glory. We must exclude the Nights of Glory occurring in these one thousand months; otherwise, one object would be better than a group like it. So, the meaning is that the Night of Glory is better than one thousand months including no Nights of Glory.

Now, why does Allah *the Almighty* choose the number one thousand? The scholars say that this number was the biggest one known to the Arabs at the time of revelation. In this connection, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘... every one of them loves that he should be granted a life of a thousand years ...’

(*al-Baqara*: 96). I think you are aware of the story of the daughter of Kisra when the Muslims liberated Al-Mada'in of Persia. One of the Companions wanted his share in the spoil to be marrying the daughter of Kisra. When that was reported to her, she said, 'Where is that man who wants to marry me?' When she saw him, she said, 'I want to ransom myself. How much money do you want?' He said, 'One thousand *Dinars*. ' The people asked him, 'Why did not you ask for more, for she can pay one hundred thousand *Dinars*?' He replied, 'By Allah, if I knew a number bigger than one thousand, I would say it.'

Other scholars hold that the chapter in question was revealed in Medina and the number 'one thousand' denotes a factual reality. It is reported that Al-Hassan ibn 'Ali said, 'Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* said while he was on the pulpit, 'It was shown to me that the reign of the Umayyad dynasty will last for a long time. When I doubted this matter, Allah *the Almighty* revealed to me: 'We sent it down on the Night of Glory. What will explain to you what that Night of Glory is? The Night of Glory is better than a thousand months.' (*al-Qadr*: 1-3) This is how long the Umayyad rule will remain (one thousand months).'

Further, some scholars hold that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said that some of the children of Israel kept obeying Allah *the Almighty* for eighty years. As the lifetimes of the people in his *ummah* are shorter than eighty years, Allah *the Almighty* gave him this privilege, that is, one Night is better than eighty years. Thus, the Night of Glory is an honour for Messenger Muhammad and a compensation for his *ummah*.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

نَزَّلَ الْمَلَكُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ

**On that night the angels and the Spirit descend  
again and again with their Lord's permission on  
every task [4] (The Quran, *al-Qadr*: 4)**

The Arabic origin of the word *tanazzal* (to descend) is *tatanazzal*, the letter *ta* is omitted to make the word easier to be pronounced. That is why it is said:

The word that starts with two ta` letters can be shortened to one ta` as in 'Tanazzal Al-Mala`ka' (The Angels descend)

In the verse in question, the word 'Spirit' refers to Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*. Regarding Allah's saying, '... with their Lord's permission on every task.' (*al-Qadr*: 4), do the angels descend with the Quran or with every task? The verse includes both of them; in that night, the Quran descends and all the matters are ordained. The angels mentioned in this verse are charged with revealing the Quran and carrying out other tasks ordained by Allah *the Almighty*. Elsewhere, Allah *the Almighty* says about these angels: 'Then those who regulate the affair.' (*an-Nazi`at*: 5)

We have previously concluded that the root *nazala* (to send the Quran down) has many derivatives. Most of them can be attributed to Allah *the Almighty* as well as the intermediary that brought it down, namely Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*. The only exception is the derivative *anzala* (to send down); it can only be attributed to Allah *Glorified is He Alone*. Consequently, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'We sent it down on the Night of Glory.' (*al-Qadr*: 1)

Through what has been revealed to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Allah *the Almighty* clarifies that He created the time and the place and then made sometimes and places better than others. Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* made some human beings, for whom the place and time were created, excel more than others. The selection of some of His people is a Grace that Allah *the Almighty* confers on anyone He chooses. Allah *the Almighty* knows best with whom to place His Message, a fact which is clear in His saying, 'Allah chooses Messengers from among the angels and from among the men ...' (*al-Hajj*: 75), and 'Surely Allah chose Adam and Nuh (Noah) and the descendants of Ibrahim (Abraham) and the descendants of Imran above the nations.' (*Al-`Imran*: 32)

Preferring a certain time on account of a certain event that can happen at any time gives rise to the following common question: 'Why is this time specially preferred and selected?' The reason for preferring a certain time is that Allah *the Almighty* wills so, because the periods of time themselves are similar and are not the criterion for preference. Thus, it is Allah *Glorified is He*

Who prefers sometimes to other according to His Will, which is the criterion for preference. Likewise, the reason for preferring some places to others is not intrinsic in the preferred places. Rather, it is Allah *the Almighty* Who prefers certain places to others. In this sense, Allah *the Almighty* preferred the hour of prayer to the rest of the hours; the hour of accepting the invocation on Friday to the rest of the hours of that day; the Friday to the rest of days of the week; the Night of Glory to the rest of the nights; and the month of *Ramadan* to the rest of the months.

The saying of Allah, Almighty, ‘We sent it down on the Night of Glory.’ (*al-Qadr*: 1), indicates that this night has a great position and a high rank. Further, it indicates that its high rank is not only due to the revelation of the Quran in it, for it is eternally great due to the ordainment of every matter therein. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Therein (that night) is decreed every matter of ordainments.’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 4) The matters are decreed in that Night before and after the revelation of the Quran. So, Allah *the Almighty* chose to reveal the Quran, the great criterion, in the night when every matter is decreed. This is because it has a great position even before its revelation in it.

Some scholars say that it was given that high rank due to the revelation of the Quran in it. However, we say that the highness of the rank of that night increased after its revelation in it. This means that this night will remain forever greater and loftier than other nights. All the nights will remain inferior to it, as it is the Night of Criterion and Wisdom when the Quran was revealed from the unseen world to the first stage of the seen world. Afterwards, the Quran descended in the same night to the lower heaven, as the Scribing Angels brought down to Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* the verses to be revealed every year.

This does not mean that the beginning of its revelation to us was on the Night of Glory, as some scholars hold, saying, ‘As the Quran was sent down on the Night of Glory, then the first verse to be revealed to Messenger Muhammad was also on the Night of Glory.’ We say, ‘No; it suffices that the portion including this verse was revealed on the Night of Glory.’ Thus, this Night witnessed all the stages of revealing the Quran from the unseen world to the seen one. Its revelation to the seen world took some stages; it was

revealed to Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* and then to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In this sense, the greatness and honour of the Night of Glory are multifaceted.

Here, arises a question, which is, 'Why was the Quran revealed in the night and not in the day'? The scholars say that this is because night is the time of tranquillity and quietness while the day is the time of activity and noise, distracting people's attention and scattering their faculties. As for the night, it the time of lucidity when the faculties are collected and the hearts are clear. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Surely the rising by night is the firmest way to tread and the best corrective of speech.' (*al-Muzzammil*: 6) This is because the souls with clear minds are readier to receive knowledge as they are not distracted by anything. Further, the night is the time of retreat which is the cause of lucidity. When the people gather, their thoughts intermingle and they mutually transmit their ideas. As for the retreat, it is the time when man can think clearly and consider his situation.

Moreover, if we reflect on the nature of Allah's creation of the night and the day, we find that the night is the result of a negative action. That is to say that the day is the result of sunrise while the night is the result of sunset, which a negative action is leading to the coming of the night. As for the day, it is the result of a positive action that is, causing the sun to rise. Now, what is the difference between the positive and the negative action? The negative action entails that the object returns to its nature. For example, if the lamp does not exist, the darkness shrouds the place. Thus, the darkness required the existence of a lighting day that befits the activity of life and pursuing the means of sustenance.

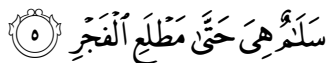
In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* praises the people who offer voluntary late night prayers because the night is the best time for retreat. Allah *the Almighty* praises the good people, saying, 'They used to sleep but little of the night, and in the hours before dawn they would ask forgiveness.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 17-18), besides, worshipping Allah *the Almighty* at night is far removed from showing off and considering the people. For the aforementioned reasons, Allah *the Almighty* chose the night to send down His Way of Guidance therein, away from the noise of the life and its clamour. If

we are seeking to know the wisdom and the rationale behind choosing the night, we should know that the mere Divine Will is the suitable wisdom and rationale. Despite that, we may search for some other reasons to satisfy the need of the curious human soul.

Regarding the saying of Allah *the Almighty*, ‘On that night the angels and the Spirit descend again and again with their Lord’s permission on every task.’ (*al-Qadr*: 4), the conjunction ‘and’ entails that the angels are different from the Spirit. However, some scholars say that the Spirit is specific and the angels are general, as in His saying, ‘My Lord, forgive me and my parents and whoever enters my house a believer and the believing men and believing women.’ (*Nuh*: 28) Another view is that the ‘Spirit’ is different from the angels because it has a distinctive, additional feature. The angels who descend are those who regulate the affairs and take care of people’s interests. We have previously explained that the angels are divided into many kinds. Some of them are the exalted ones who do nothing but glorify Allah *the Almighty* and have nothing to do with the creation. As for those who regulate the affairs, they are the ones charged with fulfilling the interests of the people. Further, some scholars say that the word ‘angels’ is general referring to all the angels. As for the Spirit, it is a kind of the angels who watch over the other angels in the way the recording angels watch over us and record our deeds. Another opinion is that the Spirit here refers to Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* as in Allah’s saying, ‘The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down.’ (*ash-Shu‘ara*: 193)

Regarding His saying, ‘... on every task.’ (*al-Qadr*: 4), it means that the angels and the Spirit descend to fulfil the task related to everything that sustains the universal order. This universal order needs some tasks related, for example, to the rains which bring about the provisions. Other matters are related to the wars, calamities, disasters and death, which are the task of ‘Izra’il. Thus, each of the regulating angels has a task to carry out on the earth. His saying, ‘On that night the angels and the Spirit descend again and again with their Lord’s permission on every task.’ (*al-Qadr*: 4) means that the decrees of giving life, causing death and the occurrence of calamities, good events and evil ones are issued in that Night. All the matters, be they good or evil, are decreed in the Night of Glory.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says,



**[there is] peace that night until  
the break of dawn [5] (The Quran, *al-Qadr*: 5)**

Dividing the Divine Decrees into good and evil is a wrong understanding on the part of the human being. The apparent evil decrees are Allah's Will and if we looked at their ultimate outcomes, we find them good ones. This is applicable to even the calamities and war that we consider evil. The right scale for such events is His saying, '... And if it were not for Allah checking [some] people by means of others, the Earth would have been corrupted ...' (*al-Baqara*: 251). Even wars are considered means leading to peace. That is why the 'Prince of Poets', Ahmed Shawqi, praised Messenger Muhammad, saying,

The just war is your law

As a drug taken from a deadly poison

Checking some people by means of others maintains the balance of life. One force deters another to not allow it to terrify the people and make mischief. The word 'peace' in the verse in question is a comprehensive term. Its general meaning is safety, stability, serenity, and tranquillity. The peace of the human being should be with his Lord regarding creed, with himself and his faculties and with the society where he lives.

Further, peace may come from an unexpected source. For example, the person may get sick and wrongly thinks that his illness is a calamity and evil. In reality, however, it is good for him because it purifies him from the sins. Thus, one should not consider the events from the angle that satisfies his soul, for behind these events there is supreme wisdom intended by Allah *the Almighty*. Furthermore, the calamity inflicting someone else could be the cause of your reform. Thus, there are facets of goodness behind all the Divine Decrees.

In the factual reality, we have undergone difficult events that turned out to be Divine Graces. We see no aspect of goodness or peace in the drought, for example. In reality, however, it is a cure that prevents the people from



exceeding the limits and turning away from Allah *the Almighty* Who created them and provides them with sustenance. When drought befalls a certain people, it makes them return to Him *the Almighty* and shun their deception by their power or the nature that follows their wishes. In this connection, a leader of a country said, ‘Now, we have built the dam and you, people, can irrigate your lands, whether the rain falls or not.’ Likewise, the flood may cause drowning and destruction. Thus, we must understand that the universe is not running according to people’s whims and desires, for Allah *the Almighty* manages the affairs of His creatures. The calamities and the difficult events could be intended to direct people’s attention to Allah *Glorified is He* so that they return to Him on the individual and the societal level.

So, His saying, ‘[there is] peace that night until the break of dawn.’ (*al-Qadr*: 5) means that all His Decrees are peaceful, even if we consider them otherwise. Our role is to search for the good aspects in the events however evil they seem to be. For example, when someone is inflicted with an illness, he should not consider the harm thereof but the outcome of that illness, that is, purifying them from the sins, having the misdeeds forgiven and elevating his spiritual rank. Therefore, there are many aspects of wisdom in the Decrees that Allah *the Almighty* issues and we should deduce these aspects.

In the chapter of *Al-‘Imran*, Allah *Glorified is He* deals with this issue, saying, ‘Say: “O Allah, Master of the Kingdom! You give the kingdom to whomsoever You please and take away the kingdom from whomsoever You please, and You exalt whom You please and abase whom You please in Your hand is the good ...”’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 26). We think that giving the kingdom to whomever He pleases and exalting whomever He pleases are good while taking away the kingdom from whomever He pleases and abasing whomever He pleases are evil. However, Allah *the Almighty* corrects our misconception, saying, ‘... in Your hand is the good ...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 26). This means that goodness exists in all the four cases; giving the kingdom and taking it away are good, and exalting and abasing are also good. All the decreed events are good, whether we liked them or not. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says in a Divine Hadith: ‘By My Mighty and Majesty, if I will goodness for My servant, I will not cause them to leave the worldly life until I recompense them for his sins through an illness afflicting his body, a decrease in his

wealth and a loss in his children. If some sins still remain, the calamity of death will be heavy on him until he comes to me free of sins as if he was born anew.' Thus, all the decrees that the angels descend with are really good, regardless of our view about them. In all cases, they are peaceful.

Another possible interpretation is that His saying, '[There is] peace that night until the break of dawn.' (*al-Qadr*: 5) means that the angels descend to salute the believers. Revealing the Quran is a great honour for Messenger Muhammad's Message. Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* benevolently bestowed the Night of Glory, which is better than one thousand months, on this *ummah* as a great honour for them. The people who love each other salute each other on the happy occasions. That is why it is said that the angels descend in that Night under the leadership of Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*. He distributes them on all corners of the world. There is no house where a believing man or woman dwells except that the Angels enter it to salute the believers.

the chapter of

***al-Bayyina***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Bayyina* <sup>(1)</sup>:

لَمْ يَكُنِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ  
مُنْفَكِينَ حَتَّى تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَةُ ﴿١﴾

**Those who disbelieve among the People of the Book and the idolaters were not about to change their ways until they were sent clear evidence [1] (The Quran, *al-Bayyina*: 1)**

The clear evidence is the evident, powerful proof that depends on the natural predisposition. Such evidence is a gift that Allah *the Almighty* gives to the thinking mind in order to be guided to the fact that behind the creation of the universe there is a Creator Who regulates its affairs. So, the clear evidence is the natural belief which is instilled in the essence of the created beings. The clear proofs are the evident matters that conclusively end all the disputes over certain issues. They are not open to disputations because their arguments are clear, evident, and unquestionable. They could be the miracles that prove the truthfulness of the Messengers or the clear verses containing the obvious rulings that regulate people's activities in life and ensure their happiness. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Certainly We have revealed clear verses...' (*an-Nur*: 46). This verse means that the clear verses govern people's activity in life so that everyone carries out their mission, and the activities

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(1) The chapter of *Al-Bayyina* consists of eight verses, and is 98th chapter in the order of the *Mushaf*. It is also called the chapter of '*Lam Yakun*'. Most of the narrations state that it was revealed in Medina, but some narrations state that it was revealed in Mecca.

become cooperative not contradictory. The problem with people's activity is that some of them construct while the rest destruct.

Allah *the Almighty* says, 'those who disbelieve among the People of the Book and the idolaters were not about to change their ways ...' (*al-Bayyina*: 1). Allah *Glorified is He* does not mention the ways they were not about to change. This is because they are known from the context. That is to say that those who disbelieve among the people of the Book and the idolaters were not about to change their ways of disbelief until they were sent clear evidence. The people of the Book are the followers of Musa (Moses) and 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon them*. The Torah was revealed to the former and the Gospel was revealed to the latter. They are not all the same, for some of them believed in the message of Musa (Moses) as it was revealed, calling for unifying Allah *the Almighty*. Likewise, some of them believed in the message of 'Isa (Jesus) which states that he is a Messenger of Allah *the Almighty*. In fact, all the messengers from Nuh (Noah) to Messenger Muhammad *peace be upon them* call for monotheism.

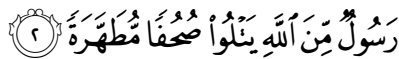
As for the disbelievers among the people of the Book, they are the ones who went astray and diverted from the way of monotheism that affirms that there is no god but Allah. Allah *the Almighty* mentions those people along with polytheistic idolaters like the Arabs who ascribed gods to Him *the Almighty*. The word *kufr* means to conceal the truth; so the disbelievers concealed belief in Allah *the Almighty* and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

The problem with the people of the Book is that they refused to believe in Messenger Muhammad's Message, a fact which is clear in His saying, 'And when it is said to them, "Believe in what Allah has revealed", they say, "We believe in that which was revealed to us"; and they deny what is besides that...' (*al-Baqara*: 91). They deny the Quran and Messenger Muhammad, saying, 'We only believe in the Torah', others, 'We only believe in the Gospel'. They disbelieve in what has been revealed after their Books, concealing it as if it was not revealed. In fact, when they disbelieve in the Quran, they disbelieve in the Torah and Gospel because the Quran affirms what has been revealed in these Books. In reality, they are liars, for they are disbelievers by nature.

Some scholars say that disbelief is the synonym of atheism and denying Allah's Existence. Evidently, atheism is a kind of disbelief, but it is not the

only one. Someone may ask, ‘How do you say that the Jew and the Christian are disbelievers while they believe in Allah’s Existence and in a heavenly Book?’ As a matter of fact, disbelief is not confined to atheism, for it also includes the one who does not believe in the final Messenger, i.e. Messenger Muhammad and the Quran. It also includes those who say that ‘Isa (Jesus) is Allah, the Son of Allah or the third in a trinity. This fact is affirmed explicitly in Quranic texts.

The clear evidence has been given many times to the people of the Book and the polytheists, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Ask the Israelites how many a clear sign We have given them; and whoever changes the favour of Allah after it has come to him, then surely Allah is severe in requiting (evil).’ (*al-Baqara*: 211) Even the polytheists refused to leave the religion of their fathers, a fact which is clear in His saying, ‘And when it is said to them, “Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger”, they say, “That on which we found our fathers is sufficient for us.” What! Even though their fathers knew nothing and did not follow the right way.’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 104) The Arabic word *munfakkin* in the verse in question means that the people of the Book and the idolaters were not about to leave and abandon their disbelief and polytheism. They will keep on following their evil ways.



**A messenger from God, reading out pages  
[blessed with] purity [2] (The Quran, *al-Bayyina*: 2)**

The clear evidence is ‘A messenger from Allah...’ (*al-Bayyina*: 2). The messenger needs a proof, for no one can claim to be a messenger without a proof or a confirmation from Allah *the Almighty*. The messenger must put forward a miracle to prove that he is really a messenger sent from Allah *Glorified is He*. The miraculous sign, as we know, is the wonderful matter that breaks the law of the nature to confirm the truthfulness of a messenger in what he conveys from Him. So, the clear evidence is what proves to the people of the Book and the idolatrous that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a Messenger sent to them. Some scholars hold that the word *munfakkin* means that they will abandon their disbelief. Accordingly,

the clear evidence is Messenger Muhammad because he came with the proof of his truthfulness and is the criterion for truth and falsehood. Other scholars maintain that the word *munfakkin* means that they will not leave the worldly life until the punishment befalls them openly. Accordingly, the clear evidence would refer to the punishment, and His saying, 'A messenger from Allah, reading out pages [blessed with] purity.' (*al-Bayyina*: 2), would be the beginning of a new statement that is not related to the previous verse.

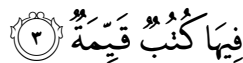
As for His saying, '... reading out pages [blessed with] purity.' (*al-Bayyina*: 2), it means that part of the mission of the messenger is to recite to us what has been revealed of Allah's Book. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Even as We have sent among you an Apostle from among you who recites to you Our communications and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know.' (*al-Baqara*: 151) and 'Certainly Allah conferred a benefit upon the believers when He raised among them a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His communications ...' (*Al-'Imran*: 164). He *peace and blessings be upon him* recited the wonderful verses of the Quran to them. These recited verses direct people's attention to the universal signs. He does not recite the verses so that the people appreciate them, for his mission is to direct the attention of everyone listening to the Quran to the One Who created the marvellous, beautiful universe.

There is a difference between reciting the Quran and teaching it. Recitation means that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* recited the Quran to them. As for teaching it, it means that they recite the Quran and be taught what they have not learned about it. The recitation is synonymous with reading. As for learning the Quran, it entails knowing the meaning of the verses and the rulings they contain. When Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Say, "Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you ..."' (*al-An'am*: 151), this means that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has nothing to do with making things lawful or unlawful. He is just a reciter for what Allah *Glorified is He* made unlawful and he does not have the right to change or alter anything in Quran. That is why the aforementioned verse is concluded with His saying, '... this He has enjoined you with ...' (*al-An'am*: 151). So, it is Allah *the Almighty* who commands the people.



With regard to His saying, ‘... [blessed with] purity.’ (*al-Bayyina*: 2), the Quran is described as pages like the Book of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*: ‘Or, has he not been informed of what is in the scriptures of Musa (Moses)?’ (*an-Najm*: 36) We also know that there are scriptures for Shayt and Idris (Enoch) *peace be upon them* as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Has not there come to them a clear evidence of what is in the previous books?’ (*Ta Ha*: 133) Further, Allah *the Almighty* told us that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) had scriptures: ‘Most surely this is in the earlier scriptures. The scriptures of Ibrahim (Abraham) and Musa (Moses).’ (*al-A’la*: 18-19)

The difference between the scriptures of Musa (Moses) and Ibrahim (Abraham) and that of Muhammad is that the former are not the miracles of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) or Musa (Moses). As for the Scripture of Muhammad, the Quran, it is his miracle. It is a miraculous Book challenging the eloquent people of Quraysh to bring about the like of one of its verses. The pages are the material on which the Book is written. So, the meaning is that the messenger recites what is written on the pages. Afterwards, the pages are described as pure. They are free from additions, omissions, fabrications and falsehood, for all of them are true. They are far removed from being defamed for they are mentioned with the best qualities and praised in the perfect way. This purity stems from their purity in the Preserved Tablet, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘So let him who pleases mind it. In honoured books, exalted, purified.’ (*Abasa*: 12-14) They are books of high positions and are cleansed of all the impurities and filth. The disobedient people’s hands do not touch them, for only the purified one touches them. When Allah *the Almighty* describes the pages as purified, He in reality describes what is written on them as purified from all the impurities. Allah *the Almighty* then says:



**Containing true scriptures [3]  
(The Quran, *al-Bayyina*: 3)**

The purified pages contain rightful, true scriptures. They are neither crooked nor contradictory; rather, they distinguish the truth from falsehood. They are wise scriptures guiding to right way and righteousness. The religion

of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* is described as 'the right religion' in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Say, "Surely, (as for) me, my Lord has guided me to the right path; (to) a most right religion, the faith of Ibrahim (Abraham) the upright one ..."' (*al-An'am*: 161). The Arabic word *qayyim* means to fulfil a matter in the way that reforms it. Likewise, the religion reforms people's activities in life through prescribing certain values. In the same connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, '... That is the correct religion ...' (*at-Tawba*: 36). This means that the religion of Islam regulates our lives correctly and dominates the previous heavenly messages. Similarly, Allah *Glorified is He* says, '... this is the right religion but most people do not know.' (*Yusuf*: 40) This means that Islam is the right religion.

The scriptures mentioned in the verse in question are right and fair. In the story of the hired person, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'No doubt I will judge between you according to Allah's Laws.'<sup>(1)</sup> These purified pages contain Allah's fair, valuable, and right rulings that are far removed from injustice. These rulings are included in Allah's Book.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَمَا نَفَرَقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَةُ ﴿٤﴾

**[Yet] those who were given the Scripture became divided  
only after they were sent [such] clear evidence [4]  
(The Quran, *al-Bayyina*: 4)**

Those who were given the Scripture are mentioned in many verses like His saying, '...and those to whom the Book had been given did not show

(1) Abu Hurayra and Zayd ibn Khalid Al-Juhani narrated: 'A Bedouin came and said, "O Allah's Messenger! Judge between us according to Allah's Laws." His opponent got up and said, "He is right. Judge between us according to Allah's Laws." The Bedouin said, "My son was a labourer working for this man, and he committed illegal sexual intercourse with his wife. The people told me that my son should be stoned to death; so, in lieu of that, I paid a ransom of one hundred sheep and a slave girl to save my son. Then I asked the learned scholars who said, 'Your son has to be lashed one-hundred lashes and has to be exiled for one year.'" The Prophet said, "No doubt I will judge between you according to Allah's Laws. The slave-girl and the sheep are to go back to you, and your son will get a hundred lashes and one year exile." He then addressed somebody, "O Unais! Go to the wife of this (man) and stone her to death." So, Unais went and stoned her to death.' See Malik, *Muwatta'*, Hadith no. 695.

opposition but after knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves; and whoever disbelieves in the communications of Allah then surely Allah is quick in reckoning.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 19) The division of the people of the Book refers to their difference after knowledge had come to them. They did not differ due to imitation, conjecture, ignorance, or doubt.

Here, they differed and were divided after the coming of the clear evidence which proves the truthfulness of the Messenger. So, His saying, ‘...those who were given the Scripture ...’ (*al-Bayyina*: 4), refers to the people to whom the Way of Guidance has been revealed. They were given the Scripture and comprehended its content including the glad tidings about the coming of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. They neither abided by the rulings of their Scripture nor believed in the final Scripture. The Jews used to pray for victory over the Arabs through the final Messenger. So, they knew that Allah *the Almighty* would send him *peace and blessings be upon him*. Out of envy from themselves, they disbelieved in him because he was an Arab Messenger.

Therefore, Prophet Muhammad’s Message was not surprising for the people of the Book; on the contrary, they were waiting for its coming. They used to affirm that they would believe in it, as their Scriptures imposed on them. However, they refused to believe and denied the Message after its coming. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And when there came to them a Book from Allah verifying that which they have, and a foretime they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieve, but when there came to them (Prophet) that which they did not recognise, they disbelieved in him; so Allah’s curse is on the disbelievers.’ (*al-Baqara*: 89) The rabbis recognised the truthfulness of the Message and used to pray for victory against the people of Medina through Messenger Muhammad, saying, ‘The time of the coming of a Message is soon. We will believe in him and kill you like the people of ‘Ad and Iram.’ Instead of being the first people to believe in him, they were the first people to disbelieve in him, a fact which is clear in His saying, ‘And believe in what I have revealed, verifying that which is with you, and be not the first to deny it, neither take a mean price in exchange for My communications; and Me, Me alone should you fear.’ (*al-Baqara*: 41)

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘[Yet] those who were given the Scripture became divided only after they were sent [such] clear evidence’ (*al-Bayyina*: 4)

alludes to the fact that they were united, unanimously affirming that they would believe in the Messenger mentioned in their Books. However, when he *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent, they divided and differed. Some of the Jews like ‘Abdullah ibn Salam and the Christians like Bahira Ar-Rahib believed in him. However, many of the people of the Book did not believe and became divided after the Messenger came from another people, namely the Arabs.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ وَيُقِيمُوا  
الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقَيِّمَةِ

**Though all they are ordered to do is worship God alone,  
sincerely devoting their religion to Him as people of true  
faith, keep up the prayer, and pay the prescribed alms, for  
that is the true religion [5] (The Quran, *al-Bayyina*: 5)**

Allah *Glorified is He* did not order the people of the Book except to do what the peoples before them were ordered to do, that is, to worship Him *the Almighty* Alone. In the Torah and the Gospel, they were commanded to sincerely devote their worship to Him, Alone. In this regard, ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* said, ‘I did not say to them aught save what You did enjoin me with: That serve Allah, my Lord and your Lord ...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 117). This is the mission of all the messengers, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And certainly We raised in every nation a Messenger saying, “Serve Allah and shun Satan...”’ (*an-Nahl*: 36).

Worship means to abide by doing the orders and to abstain from doing the prohibitions. In the same connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And I have not created the jinn and man except that they should worship Me.’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 56) So, the reason for creating the human beings and the Jinn is worshipping Allah *the Almighty*. Worship is not confined to sitting in the mosque and glorifying Allah *Glorified is He*. Rather, it is a way of Guidance for the whole life – at home, work and seeking provision. If Allah *the Almighty* had wanted His servants to offer prayer and glorify Him only, He would not have given them free will. Rather, He would have compelled them to worship Him like the rest of the creatures.

As for His saying, ‘... sincerely devoting their religion to Him as people of true faith ...’ (*al-Bayyina*: 5), it is a command to all the people to worship Allah *the Almighty* sincerely devoting their religion to Him. Linguistically, the word *ikhlas* (sincerity) means to clear something from the impurities. With regard the creed and the good deeds, the impurities corrupt their perfection and sincerity. Sincerity is the action of the heart in which it acknowledges that the person worships Allah *the Almighty* Alone without any partner. One may say, ‘Sincerity is the action of the heart, and as the person does not hurt anyone or do misdeeds, then it is not necessary for them to pray due to his sincere intention’. We say, ‘The matter is not all about intentions, for the actions are also important.’ Allah *the Almighty* says in a Divine Hadith, ‘Sincerity is one of My secrets that I placed in the hearts of the servants I love.’ The actions may apparently seem similar but they vary according to the sincerity in doing them. Some people are totally sincere while other people are less in their sincerity. The matter of sincerity is not governed by any law, for it is defined according to Allah’s Knowledge about His servant’s hearts.

The people should worship Him sincerely ‘... as people of true faith ...’ (*al-Bayyina*: 5). The Arabic word *hunafa`* is derived from their saying ‘*Hanaf Ar-Rijl*’ (The crookedness of the leg). Likewise, it is said, ‘This object is *hanif* (not straight).’ This description does not mean that those sincere people are crooked; rather, they are straight and upright. That is why Allah *the Almighty* described Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, ‘but he was (an) upright (man) ...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 67). This means that he did not worship idols. So, the word *hunafa`* means to abide by Allah’s commands and to do them sincerely.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘... keep up the prayer, and pay the prescribed alms ...’ (*al-Bayyina*: 5). They are upright in their creed and sincerity to Allah *the Almighty*. Further, they abide by His commands, whether they related to the rituals or the transactions. Prayer is the main act of worship and paying the prescribed alms is the sign of social solidarity. Its due amount is 2.5% of the rich people’s wealth that they pay to the poor in order that they satisfy their needs. It is stipulated that the wealth reaches a minimum amount of money and that one year passes after it reaches that amount. If these conditions are not met, then it is not obligatory to pay *zakat*.

Prayer means to submit, obey, and supplicate to Allah *the Almighty*. As for the word *zakat*, it means purification of the soul and growth. *Zakat* was prescribed after Messenger Muhammad's immigration to Medina. This does not mean that before the immigration there was not charitable giving of alms. This has already happened before immigration. So, the people are commanded to bear witness that there is no god worthy of worship but Allah. Further, they are commanded to offer the prescribed prayers, to pay the charitable and the prescribed alms.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, '... for that is the true religion.' (*al-Bayyina*: 5) This is the true, correct and upright religion that the upright *ummah* should embrace. The religion includes the actions and the sayings. For example, declaring that there is no god but Allah is a saying and offering prayer and paying the prescribed alms are actions. Further, sincerity is the action of the heart which is necessary for the sayings and the deeds in order to be correct and acceptable by Allah *Glorified is He*.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ فِي نَارِ  
جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أُولَئِكَ هُمْ شَرُّ الْبَرِيَّةِ ﴿٦﴾

**Those who disbelieve among the People of the Book  
and the idolaters will have the Fire of Hell, there to remain.  
They are the worst of creation [6] (The Quran, *al-Bayyina*: 6)**

Here, Allah *the Almighty* mentions the fate of the disbelievers among the people of the Book and the idolaters. The people of the Book disbelieved in Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the Book that was revealed to him, concealing the truth, though he is mentioned in their Books. As for the idolaters, they are the ones who associated other deities with Allah *the Almighty* and disbelieved in Him. They concealed the truth that all the messengers came with, that is, there is no god worthy of worship but Allah, Alone without any partner. Both groups, the disbelievers among the people of the Book and the idolaters: '... will have the Fire of hell, there to remain ...' (*al-Bayyina*: 6). The hardship of dwelling eternally in the fire of hell is far more difficult than suffering the fire in the worldly life. The fire of hell is

their painful fate which will be their last destination due to their disbelief and denial of the truth.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘... They are the worst of creation.’ (*al-Bayyina*: 6) They are the evillest of creation. By contrast, the believers are described as ‘good’ in the following Hadith: ‘A strong believer is better and dearer to Allah than a weak one, and both are good.’ So, the two previous disbelieving groups are the worst and most wicked of creation on the earth. They are the evilest creatures that Allah *the Almighty* created.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ خَيْرُ الْبَرِيَّةِ ﴿٧﴾

**Those who believe and do good deeds are  
the best of creation [7] (The Quran, *al-Bayyina*: 7)**

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the second kind of creation. The first kind was: ‘Those who disbelieve among the People of the Book and the idolaters ...’ (*al-Bayyina*: 6); their fate will be ‘... the Fire of hell, there to remain ...’ (*al-Bayyina*: 6). As for those who believe in Allah and Messenger Muhammad and do good deeds, they are the best of creation. They deserved this rank due to their belief and good deeds, not their wealth, prestigious position and power. In this regard, Abu Hurayra narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Shall I tell you about the best of creation?’ They said, ‘Yes, Allah’s Messenger.’ He said, ‘The one who holds the rein of his horse in the way of Allah. Whenever there is a frightful cry for fight, he mounts his horse. Shall I tell you about the best of creation?’ They said, ‘Yes, Allah’s Messenger.’ He said, ‘A man having some sheep, offering prayer and paying the prescribed alms.’ Shall I tell you about the worst of creation?’ They said, ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘The one who is asked by Allah, but does not give.’<sup>(1)</sup>

One may ask, ‘Are the believers who do good deeds better than the angels, given that the latter are part of the creation?’ In this connection, ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn Al-‘As said, ‘By Allah, Allah prefers the believer to

(1) See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 9142.

some of His angels who worship Him.’<sup>(1)</sup> Further, it is narrated that when Al-Hasan Al-Basri was asked about Allah’s saying, ‘Those who believe and do good deeds are the best of creation.’ (*al-Bayyina*: 7), about whether or not they are better than the angels, he said, ‘Woe to you, how can the angels be equal to those who believe and do good deeds?’

جَزَاؤُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٌ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا  
رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ رَبَّهُ.

**Their reward with their Lord is everlasting Gardens graced  
with flowing streams, where they will stay forever. God is  
well pleased with them and they with Him. All this is for  
those who stand in awe of their Lord [8]  
(The Quran, *al-Bayyina*: 8)**

This is the reward of the best of creation who believe and do good deeds. In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘(As for) these , their reward is forgiveness from their Lord, and gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them, and excellent is the reward of the labourers.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 136) They will be fully recompensed for their good deeds. As they are the best of creation due to their belief and good deeds, their reward is unfailing and eternal. Their reward is: ‘... with their Lord ...’ (*al-Bayyina*: 8). It is not given by another god or lord; rather, it is reserved for them with their Lord Who says, ‘... and give good tidings to those who believe that they will have a [firm] precedence of honour with their Lord ...’ (*Yunus*: 2).

The expression ‘... with their Lord ...’ (*Yunus*: 2), is remarkable. When your reward is with someone like you, he may not fulfil it for you. As for your reward which is with the Lord Who is charged with your sustenance, it will never be lost. So, regarding the reward and firm precedence of honour about which the believers are given the glad tidings, they are with the supreme Lord. Now, what is the reward that the believers are promised? It is: ‘... everlasting Gardens ...’ (*al-Bayyina*: 8). Moreover, they will get: ‘... best of all is Allah's goodly pleasure ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 72).

(1) See *As-Samarqandi, Bahr Al-‘Ulum*, 3/603.



The everlasting Gardens are the abode where the believers will stay eternally and forever. The worldly life is not the everlasting abode, for we inevitably will leave it. By contrast, the everlasting Gardens are eternal; they never end or cease to exist. Allah *the Almighty* then says ‘... graced with flowing streams, where they will stay forever...’ (*al-Bayyina*: 8). Allah *Glorified is He* gives another picture of the flowing streams and their sources. The sources of these flowing streams are beneath the Gardens themselves. The rivers are not coming from a remote distance so that they may be cut; rather, they are coming forth from beneath the Garden. This is the unmatched bliss.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘... Allah is well pleased with them and they with Him ...’ (*al-Bayyina*: 8). In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And (as for) the foremost, the first of the *Muhajireen* and the *Ansar*, and those who followed them in goodness, Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 100). One may ask, ‘The believers’ pleasure is understandable, as they are rewarded with the paradise. So, how can Allah’s servant be pleased with Him?’ We say that when the believing servants see the reward prepared for them in the Hereafter, they will be filled with contentment, saying, ‘(All) praise is due to Allah, Who has made good to us His promise, and He has made us inherit the land; we may abide in the garden where we please ...’ (*az-Zumar*: 74).

Pleasure means to fulfil your loveable hope. The human being does not become content until he achieves the objective that he wants and hopes for. For example, when one says to his friend, ‘Are you pleased now?’ he might not have reached the level of pleasure yet. But when he achieves what he wants, he says, ‘Thank Allah I am well pleased.’ If he received graces beyond his expectations, he will show much pleasure. Thus, pleasure has many stages. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says in a Divine Hadith that Messenger Muhammad reported, that: ‘Allah will say to the inhabitants of paradise: “Are you pleased?” They will reply: “Why should we not be pleased, O Lord, when You have given us what You have not given to any of Your creatures?” Allah will say, “Shall I not give you something better than that?” They will ask, “O Allah! What can be better than that?” Allah will say, “I shall bestow

My Pleasure upon you and I shall never be displeased with you.”<sup>(1)</sup> This is the highest level of pleasure, that is, the reward depends on mutual pleasure between the rewarded person and the One Who gives the reward. This is one of Allah’s manifestations of Benevolence.

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes this verse and this chapter by defining the owner of this great reward, which is the Gardens graced with flowing streams where they will stay forever, and Allah is well pleased with them and they with Him. Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘... All this is for those who stand in awe of their Lord.’ (*al-Bayyina*: 8) The believer fears only Allah *Glorified is He* and fears no human being. This is because he knows that all the Power belongs to Him *the Almighty* Alone. *Al-Khashya* means to fear Allah and hold Him in awe. One may fear something but he does not hold it in awe, but rather hates and looks down on it. By contrast, out of Allah’s Greatness, He is feared and held in awe. This is due to our love, glorification, and exaltation of Him *the Almighty*. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘... their Lord.’ (*al-Bayyina*: 8) instead of ‘Allah’ or ‘the God, The word ‘Lord’ reminds the believer that even though he holds Him in awe, he should not be frightened, for He is he Lord and will never abandon them.

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Sa`id Al-Khudri Allah be pleased with him. See `Abdullah ibn Al-Mubarak, Az-Zuhd Wa Ar-Raqa`q, 3/129; Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 11835; Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 6549 and 7518; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 9/2829.*

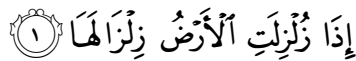
the chapter of

***az-Zalzala***



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

**T**he chapter of *az-Zalzala*<sup>(1)</sup>.



**When the earth is shaken violently in its [last] quaking [1]  
(The Quran, *az-Zalzala*: 1)**

An earthquake is the violent movement that removes the objects from their places. Allah *the Almighty* talks about this frequent natural phenomenon, saying, ‘When the earth shall be shaken with a (severe) shaking, and the mountains shall be made to crumble with (an awful) crumbling, so that they shall be as scattered dust.’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 4-6) The earthquake meant in the chapter in question is not similar to the earthquakes that we see them destroying the houses and the cities. They are just universal signs proving the truthfulness of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in what he conveys from Allah *the Almighty*.

As a universal phenomenon and sign, an earthquake pays our attention to the Mighty Earthquake that will occur in the Hereafter. The earthquakes in this worldly life are a minimised picture of what will happen in the Hereafter. This shuns our deception by the mastery over the universe, which is a privilege granted by Allah *the Almighty*. When the earthquake of *Aghadir* took

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(1) The chapter of *Az-Zalzala*, consists of eight verses and 36 words. It is the 99th chapter in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Medina, but some narrations state that it was revealed in Mecca. It was revealed after the chapter of *An-Nisa`* and before that of *Al-Hadid*.

place, the people noticed that the animal were provoked some minutes prior to the coming of the earthquake. Some of these animals went into the wilderness. How could they have this sense while we think they are insensible animals? This incident contains a remark for the human being who is a master in this universe. If Allah *the Almighty* has not made them a master in this universe, he would not be able to make the animals subservient to them.

The earthquake meant in this chapter is not a general one but rather a specific one attributed to the earth. Allah *the Almighty* commands the earth to quake. On the Day of Judgment, this earthquake will be mighty, a fact which is clear in His saying, 'O people! Guard against (the punishment from) your Lord; surely the violence of the hour is a grievous thing.' (*al-Hajj*: 1) One should unleash his imagination to realise the grievousness and the mighty of that earthquake which is described as such by Allah *the Almighty*. A normal earthquake is just a minimised picture of last earthquake and what will happen in the Hereafter. The earthquakes we witness indicate Allah's Power over the earthquake of the Hereafter and that the earth does not sustain itself. Rather, it is Allah *Glorified is He* Who sustains it. Consequently, when He wants it to quake, it will obey the command.

Allah *the Almighty* says, 'When the earth is shaken violently in its [last] quaking.' (*az-Zalzala*: 1) The earthquakes in the worldly life stop after a while, whereas the earthquake of the Hereafter will remain and its violent shaking will last until it destroys the mountains, the cities, the buildings, the trees and so on. It is the mighty, violent shake that destroys the buildings and everything on the earth.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

(وَأَخْرَجَتِ الْأَرْضُ أَثْقَالَهَا ۖ)

**When the earth throws out its burdens [2]**  
(The Quran, *az-Zalzala*: 2)

All the volcanoes, the precious materials and the wonderful objects beneath the earth are categories under this verse. The burdens of the earth could refer to the graves from which the people, the animals, the minerals,

and the treasures are brought forth. In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And casts forth what is in it and becomes empty.’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 4) This verse means that the earth casts forth the dead people and all what was buried in it like the treasures. It will bring out these objects to its surface.

وَقَالَ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا لَهَا ﴿٢﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ تُخَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا ﴿٤﴾ بِأَنَّ رَبَّكَ أَوْحَىٰ لَهَا ﴿٥﴾

**When man cries, ‘What is happening to it?’ [3]  
on that Day, it will tell all [4] because your Lord will  
inspire it [to do so] [5] (The Quran, *az-Zalzala*: 3 - 5)**

At the time of the earthquake, the person who did not believe in the Hereafter, the Resurrection and the Reckoning will wonder, ‘What is happening to the earth? Why is it shaking in this violent way?’ These questions indicate his foolishness and senselessness. He was foolish in the worldly life when he denied the Day of Judgment. Likewise, he acts foolishly in the Hereafter, saying - when what he has denied takes place - ‘What is happening to the earth?’

In the verse in question, the word ‘man’ is a genus referring to both the believer and the disbeliever. This indicates that the earthquake is one of the signs of the Hour. This is because when it takes place, not a lot of people realise it is the final quake. The people ask each other to be certain about this fact. Some scholars say that the word ‘man’ refers to only the disbeliever, for the believer knows that earthquake and does not ask about it. As for the disbeliever, he asks about it because he has disbelieved in it and the Resurrection.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘on that Day, it will tell all.’ (*az-Zalzala*: 4) In this regard Abu Hurayra narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Do you know what its information is?’ they said, ‘Allah and His Messenger know best.’ He said, ‘Indeed its information is that it will testify against every servant, male and female. It will say that he did such and such, on such and such a day.’<sup>(1)</sup> The earth tells what has been done on it, be it

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. In his *Sunnan*, At-Tirmidhi grades it as good Hadith. In his *Mustadrak*, Al-Hakim says it is authentic according to the conditions stipulated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim. In his *Talkhis*, Adh-Dhahabi agrees with him. See Ahmad, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 8867; Ibn =

good or evil. It will say about the believer, 'On my surface, he declared Allah's Oneness, offered prayer, fasted, performed the minor and the major pilgrimage, strived in Allah's Cause and obeyed his Lord.' Thereupon, the believer will be filled with joy. As for the disbelievers, the earth will say about them, 'On my surface, he disbelieved, committed adultery, theft, drank wine, etc.'

Allah *the Almighty* then says, 'because your Lord will inspire it [to do so].' (*az-Zalzala*: 5) Allah *the Almighty* secretly informs the earth because no one hears Him while He is inspiring it. Further, Allah *the Almighty* inspires the bees, the angels, and the Prophets. This inspiration to the earth, the bees, Musa's (Moses's) mother and the apostles of 'Isa (Jesus) should not be considered in the light of the technical definition of this term. It is an inspiration according to the linguistic meaning, that is, to inform secretly. If Allah *the Almighty* inspires the earth to bring forth its treasures and quake, so what do we think about His inspiration to other creatures? Everything in the universe runs by Allah's command. Allah *Glorified is He* inspires the earth secretly, and it understands Him in a way unknown to us. Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* inspires the animals, a fact which is clear in His saying, 'And your Lord revealed to the bee ...' (*an-Nahl*: 68). The bee understands Allah's inspiration through the instinct He instilled in it.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصْدُرُ النَّاسُ أَشْنَانًا لِّرُؤَا أَعْمَلِهِمْ

**On that Day, people will come forward in separate groups  
to be shown their deeds [6] (The Quran, *az-Zalzala*: 6)**

The people's coming forward is related to the Day of Judgment. After the Reckoning and the Presentation of the deeds, the people will be divided; the people of faith will be separate from the rest of the people. Further, every group following a certain religion will be separated from the rest. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, '... at that time they shall become separated one from the other.' (*ar-Rum*: 14) and '... on that day they shall become

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= Hibban, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 7360; *Al-Hakim, Mustadrak*, Hadith no. 3012 and *At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan*, Hadith no. 2429.



separated.’ (*ar-Rum*: 43) The people will come forward in separate groups and parties: ‘... a party shall be in the garden and (another) party in the burning Fire.’ (*ash-Shura*: 7) They will come forth from their graves to be held accountable and see the books of their deeds. They will see the deeds that they have done in the worldly life. Consequently, the people will go forward to see the punishment or the reward that has been prepared for them and take their position.

His saying, ‘... in separate groups ...’ (*az-Zalzala*: 6), means that they have been scattered and will not be gathered together once again. Everyone will experience their own fate and go either to paradise or the hellfire. The Arabic verb of the word *ash-tata* (in separate group) refers to the separation of the people. This word has been mentioned in another verse with the same meaning, that is, ‘in separate groups’. Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘It is no sin in you that you eat together or separately.’ (*an-Nur*: 61) This verse allows them to eat together because they used to eat only separately. Further, this word refers to the groups that never gather together. One of the groups will be given their books in the right hand and go to paradise. By contrast, the other group will be given their books in the left hand and go the hellfire. It is also said in Arabic, ‘*Shattan bayn filan wa fulan* (So and so is greatly different from so and so)’.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘... to be shown their deeds.’ (*az-Zalzala*: 6) This means that the people will go forward to see the recompense of their deeds, be they good or evil. They will review their good and evil deeds that they have done. The deeds themselves are unperceivable yet what refers to them is perceivable, that is, the books of deeds in which all the actions are recorded. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And We have made every man's actions to cling to his neck, and We will bring forth to him on the resurrection day a book which he will find wide open. Read your book; your own self is sufficient as a reckoner against you this day.’ (*al-Isra*: 13-14)

Everyone will read his book by himself. Allah *Glorified is He* does not hold the people accountable according to what He says they have done but rather what is recorded in their books. They will read their books themselves and these records will constitute an argument against them. Further, writing down the deeds is not in the way we think, for it includes the recordation of the

sounds and breaths. On the Day of Judgment, man will find his deeds recorded in a book. We can have audio-visual recording in the worldly life, so what do we think about Allah's recording for us. Everyone will see the audio-visual recording of his deeds in a way that does not enable them to deny anything. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* says to every servant, 'I will not hold you accountable; rather, I will let you hold yourself accountable'.

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ ﴿٧﴾  
وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ ﴿٨﴾

**Whoever has done an atom's-weight of good will see it [7]  
but whoever has done an atom's-weight of evil will see that [8]  
(The Quran, *az-Zalzala*: 7 - 8)**

The weight is the measure of gravity of an object. When an object is light, it falls slowly. As for a heavy object, it falls fast because gravity pulls it strongly. The measure we have in this verse is the weight of an atom. So, what is the atom? There are different views. It could mean the head of the ant that is barely seen by the eye or the ant itself. When Ibn 'Abbas was asked about it, he held some dust and threw it. When the dust flew in the air, he said, 'Every grain of this dust is called an atom.' This is what we call *haba* (scattered dust). So, the atom is a grain of dust. When Allah *the Almighty* says that He does not do an atom's weight of injustice, this is meant to show that He categorically negates being unfair in any matter.

The atom may get bigger or smaller. This does not mean that it is the least weight in general, for scientists divided the atom into electrons and ions, positive and negative. This does not contradict the Quran in anything, for Allah *the Almighty* says, '... And there does not lie concealed from your Lord the weight of an atom in the earth or in the heaven, nor anything less than that nor greater ...' (*at-Tawba*: 61). This verse mentions what is less than the atom. So, this verse affirms that there exist what is smaller than the atom, and what is even smaller than that. So, there are three stages. As the scientists divided the atom, we say the Quran mentions what is smaller than the atom. If they even divided one division of the atom, we say that the Quran also

mentions what is far less than what is smaller than an atom. This is due to the fact that every small thing should be preceded by an even smaller thing. Thus, if they will divide a division of an atom, the Quran also covers this matter and precedes the scientists' minds.

The two verses in question make a comparison between good and evil. The human being should distinguish the good because it is useful and beneficial from evil because it is harmful and awful. The word 'good' is sometimes used to refer having the quality of goodness but in different degrees, as in the Hadith narrated by Abu Hurayra that Messenger Muhammad, said, 'A strong believer is better and dearer to Allah than a weak one, and both are good.'<sup>(1)</sup> All the believers who have strong or weak faith are good. However, there are many degrees of goodness. Even though both are good, the stronger believers are better than the weak ones. In the verses in question, the description of deeds as good is employed as the opposite of the evil deeds. They are antithetical to each other.

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 34/2664; Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 79 and 4168; Ibn Hibban, Sahih, Hadith no. 5722; Al-Bayhaqi, Shu'ab Al-Iman, Hadith no. 191; and An-Nasa'i, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra, Hadith no. 10383.*



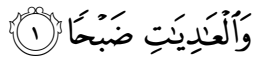
the chapter of

***al-'Adiyat***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-'Adiyat*<sup>(1)</sup> :



### By the charging steeds that pant [1] (The Quran, *al-'Adiyat*: 1)

Allah *the Almighty* swears by whatever He wants about anything He wishes. Here, Allah *the Almighty* swears by one of His creatures that fulfil a function for the people, which are: ‘... the charging steeds that pant.’ (*al-'Adiyat*: 1) The steeds here refer to the horses used in fighting in the Way of Allah *the Almighty* or in doing another act of worship. In this regard, some exegetes say that these steeds refer to the processions of pilgrims. We have previously said that an oath is used to affirm its subject that some people question its truthfulness. The subject of the oath here is three issues: ‘man is ungrateful to his Lord—and He is witness to this—he is truly excessive in his love of wealth.’ (*al-'Adiyat*: 6-8)

The man who is described with the previous three qualities is he who violates Allah’s Way of Guidance that should govern his activities in life. As for the man who abides by Allah’s Way of Guidance, he is exempted from the previous qualities. Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Man is [deep] in loss.’

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(1) The chapter of *Al-'Adiyat*, consists of 11 verses and 40 words. It is the 100<sup>th</sup> in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *Al-'Asr* and before that of *Al-Kawthar*. Al-Bazzar, Ibn Abu Hatim and Al-Hakim narrated that ibn 'Abbas said, ‘Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* dispatched steeds, but for one month no news about that had come. Thereupon, this chapter was revealed.’

(*al-'Asr*: 2) This verse refers to mankind in general. Then Allah *the Almighty* says, 'except for those who believe, do good deeds...' (*al-'Asr*: 3). Thus, following Allah's Way of Guidance through believing, doing good deeds and urging to steadfastness and truth is the way of salvation from loss.

We notice that Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the chapter of *az-Zalzala* with His saying, 'On that Day, people will come forward in separate groups to be shown their deeds: whoever has done an atom's-weight of good will see it, but whoever has done an atom's-weight of evil will see that.' (*az-Zalzala*: 6-8) We have said that Allah *the Almighty* speaks in these verses about witnessing the deeds and not the recompense: 'whoever has done an atom's-weight of good will see it, but whoever has done an atom's-weight of evil will see that.' (*az-Zalzala*: 7-8) Seeing the book of deeds is different from being recompensed for them. When the person reads his book of records, the book will be an argument against them. This is because one may not be fully certain about what was written about them by the recorders, thinking that they may add or omit something. But when he sees what is written in his book of deeds, he will remember them and be certain that nothing has been recorded in it except what he has already done. This is the meaning of: '... to be shown their deeds.' (*az-Zalzala*: 6) This is meant in order that the people make sure that what their books contain is their deeds without adding evil deeds or omitting good deeds.

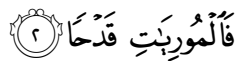
In the chapter of *al-'Adiyat*, which follows that of *Az-Zalzala*, we notice that Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Their Lord will be fully aware of them all?' (*al-'Adiyat*: 11) Thus, in the chapter in question, Allah *Glorified is He* does not talk about the recompense. In the chapter of *Az-Zalzala*, Allah *the Almighty* speaks about being shown the deeds and here Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'By the charging steeds that pant and strike sparks with their hooves, who make dawn raids, raising a cloud of dust, and plunging into the midst of the enemy, man is ungrateful to his Lord— and He is witness to this—he is truly excessive in his love of wealth. Does he not know that when the contents of graves burst forth, when the secrets of hearts are uncovered, on that Day, their Lord will be fully aware of them all?' (*al-'Adiyat*: 1-11) It is as if the previous chapter clarifies the man will see the book of his deeds and make sure that



what is recorded is consistent with what he has done. As for the chapter in question, it directs our attention to another aspect, that is, Allah *the Almighty* is fully Aware of our deeds.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*, 'By the charging steeds that pant.' (*al-'Adiyat*: 1), refers to the steeds used in fighting the enemies in the Way of Allah *the Almighty* during battle. They pant due to galloping, producing a sound different from the neigh. The word *Al-'Adiyat* also refers to the camels that go from 'Arafa to Al-Muzhdalafa and from the latter to *Mena* during pilgrimage. So, this word refers to the camels when they walk fast at a dark night in the uneven valleys. Allah *the Almighty* swears here by the steeds in the battlefield or the camels in the blessed places where the pilgrims perform the rituals of the pilgrimage.

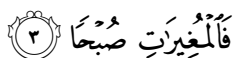
We should reflect on these two views because the exegetes differed as to whether this chapter was revealed in Mecca or in Medina. If it was revealed in Mecca, the view that holds that the verse refers to the battling steeds is not correct. This is because fighting in the Way of Allah *the Almighty* was only prescribed after immigration from Mecca to Medina. Further, if we hold that the chapter was revealed in Mecca, then the word *'Adiyat* does not refer to the camels of the pilgrimage, for it was only prescribed in the ninth year after immigration – after the treaty of *Al-Hudaybiyya*. The obligation of pilgrimage was revealed in the chapter of *Al-Imran* which was revealed in Medina. Allah *the Almighty* says, '... and pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men for the sake of Allah, (upon) everyone who is able to undertake the journey to it...' (*Al-Imran*: 97). Therefore, the preponderant view is that the chapter in question was revealed in Medina.



**And strike sparks with their hooves [2]  
(The Quran, *al-'Adiyat*: 2)**

Out of the fast galloping of the steeds, their hooves strike sparks when they clash with the stones. If we clash two stones together, they will produce fire. So, this verse refers to the steeds that strike sparks with their hooves.

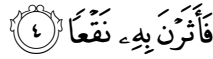
Other views maintain that it refers to people's plots, tongues or the camels that strike the pebbles with their hooves. The Oath in this verse is related to all the objects that strike sparks whether they are the steeds, the camels, the tongue – that strikes the sparks of truth, logic, and wisdom – or the men who set fire after the end of the war.



### **Who make dawn raids [3] (The Quran, *al-'Adiyat*: 3)**

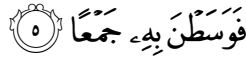
The Arabic word *ighara* refers to the time of dawn. As for *al-ghara*, it refers to the raid carried out against the enemies as well as the steeds used in this action. It refers to attacking the enemies suddenly to crush them violently and powerfully. Afterwards, the raiding army retreats. This is more harmful to the enemies special when the raid is carried out at the time of the dawn, the first part of the day. It causes a state of panic and anxiety. Providing us with safety and serenity is one Allah's Blessings, as Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And Allah sets forth a parable: (Consider) a town safe and secure ...' (*an-Nahl*: 112). That town was secured against the raids which are usually carried out at the time of the dawn when the enemy might be sleeping and not prepared to confront the raiding army.

The leaders of war still prefer morning attacks to surprise the enemy. This is a general that breaking is considered a way of trickery in the war, which is the case in Octobers war in 1973. The Egyptian army successfully surprised its enemy by starting the attack at noon because it changed the usual time for attack, that is, the morning time. Causing harm to the enemies due to morning attacks is alluded to in the Quran where Allah *the Almighty* says, 'surely their appointed time is the morning; is not the morning nigh?' (*Hud*: 81) It is as if the morning is the time when the punishment befalls the people of Lut (Lot), causing them to perish. It is a severer punishment because the dawn is the time of tranquillity and rest.



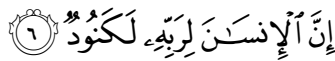
**Raising a cloud of dust [4]**  
(The Quran, *al-'Adiyat*: 4)

The galloping steeds provoke dust in the battlefield with their hooves, causing the sight to be almost impossible. The steeds and the camels raise a cloud of dust with their hooves when they pass by a place full of dust.



**And plunging into the midst of the enemy [5]**  
(The Quran, *al-'Adiyat*: 5)

The galloping steeds plunge into the midst of the fighters. This proves that they succeeded in their raiding in the morning, penetrating the first lines of the enemy's defence. The word *jam`* refers to the group of fighters or steeds, as Allah *the Almighty* says, '(As for) those of you who turned back on the day when the two armies met, only the Satan sought to cause them to make a slip-on account of some deeds they had done ...' (*Al-Imran*: 155). In this verse, the two armies are that of the believers, who follow Allah's Way of Guidance, and the disbelievers, who violate it and fight the believers.



**Man is ungrateful to his Lord [6]**  
(The Quran, *al-'Adiyat*: 6)

Here, Allah *the Almighty* describes man as ungrateful because he does not remember that the first task of his mind is to know his limits. The word *kanud* refers to the disbeliever who is ungrateful to Allah's Blessings. Consequently, he does not give out of his provision, beats his slave and makes him starve, eats alone, does not give his people at the time of calamities and forbids common kindness. It is said that this verse was revealed in reference to Qart ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl Al-Qurashi, who gathered all the previous bad qualities.

So, the word *kanud* refers to the person who breaks the promise, tells lies and follows his whims. Allah *the Almighty* rules that the human species is described with these qualities. Such a person declares his displeasure with Allah's predestination and criticizes Him for the calamities befalling them yet he forgets His Blessings. Goodness is not expected from such a person; he benefits neither himself nor other people like the barren land.

وَإِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ لَشَهِيدٌ ۖ وَإِنَّهُ لِحُبِّ الْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ ۚ

**And He is witness to this —[7] he is truly excessive  
in his love of wealth [8] (The Quran, *al-'Adiyat*: 7-8)**

The pronoun in the first verse refers to Allah *the Almighty*; He is Witness to man's ungratefulness and disbelief. In fact, Allah *Glorified is He* is Witness to everything. The witness is the one who sees an incident and cannot play any part to change its events. Allah *the Almighty* is Ever-Watchful and always witnesses everything. This means that He sees the actions and holds the people accountable for them. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Say, "What thing is the weightiest in testimony?" Say, "Allah is witness between you and me ..."' (*al-An'am*: 19). Allah *the Almighty* is the Witness, the Ruler, and the Executer. His Testimony is truthful, His Rule is fair and He does not do injustice to His servants even as much as an atom's weight.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, 'he is truly excessive in his love of wealth.' (*al-'Adiyat*: 7-8) As a matter of fact, the human being loves wealth greatly. Further, he loves to have an abundance of every good thing. That is why Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'If there were one valley of gold for the son of Adam, he would long for another one. If there were two valleys of gold for the son of Adam, he would long for a third one. His mouth will not be filled but with dust, and Allah returns to him who repents.'<sup>(1)</sup>

As man loves wealth, he withholds it and stingily refuses to pay the due right of Allah and the poor. Thus, he is stingy, not spending his money in the

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(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him and on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him in different wordings. See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 6436 and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 116/1048.*

rightful ways. The word *khayr* (goodness) is used to refer to wealth in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth for parents and near relatives ...' (*al-Baqara*: 180). Wealth refers to what is valuable. However, we wrongly confined wealth to refer to money. This is because we use money to buy everything. However, the original meaning of wealth refers to anything valuable. One's wealth could be the result of his endeavour in life or that of his father or grandfather.

Allah *the Almighty* makes spending in the Way of Allah *the Almighty* one of the kinds of righteousness, saying, '... but righteousness is this that one should believe in Allah and the last day and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and give away wealth out of love...' (*al-Baqara*: 177). Giving away wealth out of love could mean that he does so despite his passionate love for it. When one gives away his wealth, he either attains to the rank of removing it from his ownership or eliminating its love from the heart. In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And they give food out of love...' (*al-Insan*: 8). They love wealth too much, but the quality of benevolence and generosity overweigh their love for wealth.

أَفَلَا يَعْلَمُ إِذَا بُعْثِرَ مَا فِي الْقُبُورِ ۖ وَحُصِّلَ مَا فِي الصُّدُورِ ﴿٩﴾

**Does he not know that when the contents of graves  
burst forth [9] when the secrets of hearts are uncovered,  
on that Day [10] (The Quran, *al-'Adiyat*: 9 - 10)**

Here, the addressee is the man who is allured by his wealth, prestigious position, and power. Does this ungrateful disbeliever not know that there is a time when the contents of the graves burst forth? What are the contents of the graves? They include the tombs, coffins and the broken-up bones that will burst forth when the earthquakes takes place. The contents of the graves will come forth on the mighty Day of Gathering and Resurrection. The dead people will be resurrected to go forward for the mighty Gathering and Standing for the Account. Does this man not know Allah's Omnipotence, Sovereignty and Wisdom in creation? Does he not realise that Allah *Glorified is He* will

resurrect the dead people in their graves? Does the stingy person not realise that Allah *the Almighty* is fully-Aware of them? Allah *Glorified is He* will raise them from the dead to be presented for the Account.

If we reflect on the word *bu`thir* (burst forth), we find a wonderful remark as Allah *the Almighty* does not say '*bui`tha*' (to be resurrected), As a matter of fact, an increase in the wording entails an increase in the meaning. The word *bu`thir* has an additional 'r'. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* says to them, 'Do not think the graves will remain as they are after being closed up, that is, they cannot be opened, split or burst forth. Indeed, they will be split open and burst forth so that the dead people therein are resurrected on a Day they belied and disbelieved in'.

As for His saying, 'when the secrets of hearts are uncovered.' (*al-'Adiyat*: 10), the word *tahsil* means to collect, reveal and make a distinction between good and evil in one's heart. Nothing will be concealed of his deeds and secrets, however subtle and tiny it is. In this regard, a poet once said,

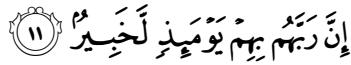
On one Day, everyone will realise the outcome of his endeavour

When the secrets and the deeds are manifested before Allah

Allah *the Almighty* knows what is in the chests, be it good or evil. The intentions of the hearts are the criterion for accepting the deeds or rejecting them, as Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Actions are only done with intentions, and every man shall have what he intended.'<sup>(1)</sup> So, rewarding or punishing the people after uncovering their deeds depends on the intention and the certitude of the heart. That is why Allah *the Almighty* concludes the chapter in question with His saying,

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of `Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 1; Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2201; Ibn Al-Mubarak, Az-Zuhd, 1/62; Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 4227; and Al-Humaydi, Musnad, Hadith no. 28.*



**their Lord will be fully aware of them all? [11]  
(The Quran, *al-'Adiyat*: 11)**

Allah *the Almighty* is fully Aware of the souls and their intentions. Allah *the Almighty* is fully Aware of the intention of any action, be it good or evil, a fact which is clear in His saying, 'If you give alms openly, it is well, and if you hide it and give it to the poor, it is better for you; and this will do away with some of your evil deeds; and Allah is aware of what you do.' (*al-Baqara*: 270) Allah *Glorified is He* is fully Aware of the intention of the one who gives away alms openly or secretly and will reward the servant accordingly. This fact makes the hearts shiver out of fear and awe. The human being may deceive the people through, for example, circumventing paying taxes. He makes one register for the right profits and another for wrong loss. In this way, he averts paying taxes even though he owns wealth.

Man should know that Allah *the Almighty* is fully Aware of his deeds and intentions. He fully knows our intentions in what we do or from which we abstain. The fully Aware knows the details of everything and nothing is hidden from Allah *Glorified is He*. Thus, the people should not deceive themselves, thinking that what they have concealed from other people could be hidden from Allah *Glorified is He*. Indeed, nothing is hidden from Him.





the chapter of

***al-Qari'a***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Qari'a* <sup>(1)</sup>.

الْقَارِعَةُ ۝۱ مَا الْقَارِعَةُ ۝۲ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْقَارِعَةُ ۝۳

**The Crashing Blow! [1] What is the Crashing Blow? [2]  
What will explain to you what the Crashing Blow is? [3]  
(The Quran, *al-Qari'a*: 1-3)**

The chapter of *al-Qari'a* has a harmonious relationship with the previous chapter. In the chapter of *al-'Adiyat*, Allah *the Almighty* swears by one of His creatures, saying, 'By the charging steeds that pant.' (*al-'Adiyat*: 1) The steeds could be used in either fighting in the cause of Allah *the Almighty* or any other act of worship. We have interpreted it as the steeds used in the processions of the pilgrims. The oath is used to affirm its subject which is usually controversial. In that chapter, the subject is three issues mentioned in His saying, 'man is ungrateful to his Lord—and He is witness to this—he is truly excessive in his love of wealth.' (*al-'Adiyat*: 6-8) The man who is described with the previous three qualities is he who violates Allah's Way of Guidance. As for the man who abides by Allah's Way of Guidance, he is exempted from the previous qualities. Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'By the declining Day. Man is [deep] in loss.' (*al-'Asr*: 1-2) The second verse refers to mankind in general. Then Allah *the Almighty* says, 'except for those who believe, do good deeds ...' (*al-'Asr*: 3).

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(1) The chapter of *Al-Qari'a*, consists of 11 verses. It is the 101<sup>st</sup> chapter in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *Al-Qiyama* and before that of *Quraysh*.

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the chapter of *az-Zalzala* with His saying, 'whoever has done an atom's-weight of good will see it, but whoever has done an atom's-weight of evil will see that.' (*az-Zalzala*: 7-8) We have said that Allah *the Almighty* speaks in these verses about witnessing the deeds, not the recompense for them. Seeing the book of deeds is different from being recompensed for them. Allah *Glorified is He* shows the person his book of deeds to be an argument against them. This is because one may not be fully certain about what was written about them by the recorders, thinking that they may add or omit something. But when he sees what is written in his book of deeds, he will remember them and be certain that nothing has been recorded except his deeds without adding evil deeds or omitting good ones.

In the chapter of *Al-'Adiyat*, which follows that of *Az-Zalzala*, we notice that Allah *the Almighty* says: 'their Lord will be fully aware of them all' (*al-'Adiyat*: 11). Thus, Allah's Knowledge and Awareness of the people are added in this chapter to the documentation and recordation of the deeds. So, Allah *Glorified is He* is Witness to the people and fully Aware of their deeds. In this way, the servant should be reassured about Allah's Absolute Justice with which He will hold the people accountable on the Day of Judgment.

Now, in the chapter of *al-Qari'a*, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'The Crashing Blow! What is the Crashing Blow? What will explain to you what the Crashing Blow is? ... the one whose good deeds are heavy on the scales will have a pleasant life, but the one whose good deeds are light [8] will have the Bottomless Pit for his home — what will explain to you what that is? A blazing fire!' (*al-Qari'a*: 1-3, 6-11) Here, Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about another stage of reckoning before the Recompense for their deeds. There are some stages of reckoning. Everyone's book of deeds is given to them to make sure it is identical to what he has done in the worldly life. Then he is called for to be held accountable before Allah *the Almighty*.

The account here does not refer to the Recompense but rather to the clarification and the presentation of the deeds. Afterwards, the deeds are weighed to be followed by the recompense and then going to paradise or hell. The chapter touches on the third stage of Reckoning which is the Balance, starting with the following question: 'The Crashing Blow! What is the

Crashing Blow? What will explain to you what the Crashing Blow is?' (*al-Qari'a*: 1-3) Allah *the Almighty* repeated 'the Crashing Blow' three times. This is because the first time is vague, stimulating the man to ask, 'What is the Crashing Blow?' (*al-Qari'a*: 2) So, the Crashing Blow is an ambiguous term and that is why one should ask about it. Thereupon, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'What will explain to you what the Crashing Blow is?' (*al-Qari'a*: 3) This means that the answer is only with Allah *Glorified is He*.

Therefore, the first mention of the Crashing Blow is vague: 'The Crashing Blow!' (*al-Qari'a*: 1) It is followed by its intensification, 'What is the Crashing Blow?' (*al-Qari'a*: 2), and then a clarification of its great position: 'What will explain to you what the Crashing Blow is?' (*al-Qari'a*: 3) How is it not possible to know the meaning of the Crashing Blow while it is an Arabic term directed to the Arabs who are well aware of their language, its meanings and linguistic features? How could there exist an undefined Arabic word to the extent that there is no answer to our question about it? The scholars say that this is because the language consists of words that express certain meanings. The meaning should exist first before the word used to express it. That word should be understandable to the speakers and the addressee as referring to that specific meaning. This is because the people agreed to use certain words to convey certain meanings in order to express themselves and their needs. So, how did the meaning of the term 'Crashing Blow' become vague that we need to ask about its meaning?

It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* wants to differentiate between the linguistic meaning and the technical one. The linguistic meaning of a word could be used to express a technical one that becomes the common meaning of that word when it is uttered – not the linguistic one. For example, the word *nahw* (grammar) linguistically means direction; one says, '*Sirtu nahwa kadha* (I walked in such and such direction).' Afterwards, the scholars of linguistics used this term to refer to the rules of grammar, calling it '*ilm an-nahw*'. Now, when we utter this term, we only think about this technical meaning, not the linguistic one. Likewise, the word *Hajj* (Pilgrimage) has a linguistic and technical meaning. Linguistically, it means heading towards a great place. Technically, it means heading towards Allah's Sacred House in a

defined time to perform certain rituals. This is also the case with the word *fiqh* (Jurisprudence).

It is as if Allah *the Almighty* says, 'The Crashing Blow! What is the Crashing Blow? What will explain to you what the Crashing Blow is?' (*al-Qari`a*: 1-3) in order to show us that the meaning of the Crashing Blow is not that which the people understand from the linguistic meaning of the term. That is to say that it does not refer to the obvious meaning of the word that is, clashing to rough objects together to produce a disturbing sound. Rather, the Crashing Blow meant here is only known to Allah *the Almighty*. It is one of the names of the mighty, horrible Day of Judgment which is an unseen matter, known only to Allah *Glorified is He*.

That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says about the Crashing Blow: 'What will explain to you what the Crashing Blow is?' (*al-Qari`a*: 3) This means that no one can tell us about it except Him *the Almighty*. Thus, we should not understand this term in the light of the linguistic meaning, for it has a technical, broader meaning that is unknown to us. Allah *the Almighty* calls the Day of Judgment the 'Crashing Blow', the 'Deafening Blow', the 'Inevitable Hour' and the 'Overwhelming Event'. Each of these names has a meaning that we will see on that Day, but it is unseen to us now. That is why we cannot set some words to express these meanings because the existence of the meaning should precede that of the word expressing it. If these meaning are unseen, how can we set some words to express them?

Allah *the Almighty* addresses us regarding the unseen matters through the understandable discourse and through the words that make the meanings closer to our perception. Here, Allah *Glorified is He* does not intend the linguistic meaning of the term 'Crashing Blow,' but rather, the technical meaning, namely the Day of Judgment. As it is unseen to us, we should ask about it because its meaning is vague.

So, Allah *the Almighty* makes understanding the unseen matters easier to us through using the words we are familiar with. That is why when He, talks about the paradise, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'A likeness of the garden which the righteous are promised ...' (*ar-Ra`d*: 15). The descriptions mentioned in the previous verse do not really portray paradise. Rather, they portray the likeness

of paradise because it is unseen to us and only Allah *the Almighty* knows its reality. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* expressed this fact in his saying, 'There will be bounties which no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human heart has ever perceived.'<sup>(1)</sup> We notice that he *peace and blessings be upon him* mentions the senses of perception according to their natural order. The eye's sight is not broader than the ear's hearing. Further, the perception of the heart is broader than the ear. So, we should reflect on how he *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered the senses in an elevating way. After all, he does not speak out of his desires.

So, if the paradise is described as such, then how can the words describe it? This is not possible because it has not been seen by an eye, heard by an ear or perceived by a heart. The Quran says about it, 'So no soul knows what is hidden for them of that which will refresh the eyes; a reward for what they did.' (*as-Sajda*: 17)

So, When Allah *the Almighty* says, 'The Crashing Blow! What is the Crashing Blow?' (*al-Qari'a*: 1-2) He does not refer to the linguistic meaning of the Crashing Blow, but rather, the technical one. The Day of Judgment strikes everything, causing the people to be astonished and in a state of panic; the sky to split and be torn apart; the earth and the mountains to crumble; the Sun to be shrouded in darkness; the stars to be dimmed and the seas to boil up and burst forth. Thus, we use a broader sense of the technical meaning of the Crashing Blow instead of the narrow linguistic one; that is why Allah *the Almighty* repeats its mention, saying, 'The Crashing Blow! What is the Crashing Blow? What will explain to you what the Crashing Blow is?' (*al-Qari'a*: 1-3) This is meant to portray the mightiness and the grievousness of that Day.

His saying, 'What will explain to you what the Crashing Blow is?' (*al-Qari'a*: 3) negates having knowledge about the Crashing Blow in the past. This means that Allah *the Almighty* would provide Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with knowledge about it in the future. However, if the verb is mentioned in the present form, this means that he neither was

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(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Sahl ibn Sa'd As-Sa'idi. See Ibn Abu Shayba, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 93; Ahmad, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 22826; and Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 5/2825.

given knowledge about something in the past nor would be given in the future. Thus, if the verb *yadri* (to know) is used in the past form, then Allah *the Almighty* would provide him with knowledge, which is not the case if the verb was in the present form. For example, the present form is employed in His saying, '... and what will make you comprehend that the hour may be nigh.' (*al-Ahzab*: 63) The matter of the Hour is known only to Allah *the Almighty* and will remain unseen until its establishment.

Further, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And what would make you know that he would purify himself.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 3) No one should sanctify anyone else, for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'I do not sanctify anyone before Allah.'<sup>(1)</sup> In a third position in the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* says, '... and what shall make you know that haply the hour be nigh?' (*ash-Shura*: 17)

As for the past form of the verb *yadri* (to know), it is mentioned thirteen times in the Quran: 'And what would make you realize what the sure calamity is!' (*al-Qalam*: 3); 'What will explain to you what the Crashing Blow is?' (*al-Qari'a*: 3); 'will have the Bottomless Pit for his home — what will explain to you what that is?' (*al-Qari'a*: 9-10); 'And what will make you realize what hell is?' (*al-Muddaththir*: 27); 'And what will make you comprehend what the day of decision is?' (*al-Mursalat*: 14); 'And what will make you realize what the Day of Judgment is?' (*al-Infitar*: 17); 'And what will make you know what the *sijjin* is?' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 8) 'And what will make you know what the highest *Illiyin* is?' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 19) 'And what will make you comprehend what the uphill road is?' (*al-Balad*: 12) 'And what will make you comprehend what the grand night is?' (*al-Qadr*: 2) and '...what will make you realize what the Crashing disaster is?' (*al-Humaza*: 5) We should not understand the matters mentioned in these thirteen positions according to their linguistic meaning, for their intended meaning

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him. He said, 'A man praised another man in the presence of the Messenger of Allah. The Messenger of Allah said: "Woe to you, you have cut the neck of your companion", several times. Then he said: "If anyone of you praises his brother, let him say, 'I think he is like this, but I do not sanctify anyone before Allah.'"' See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 65/3000.*



is only known to Allah *the Almighty*. No words in the language can express them because they are unseen. Allah *the Almighty* addresses us by the language we understand.

In order to differentiate between the past form of the verb 'to know' and the present form, we must clarify that life is an interaction between the man, the time and the place. The time veils the past and the future and the place veils the man from the present. For example, there are certain events occurring now in Mecca. What makes us unable to know them? It is the barrier of the place. Further, what makes me ignorant about what had happened here last year? It is the barrier of time which also veils what will happen here tomorrow. So, the barrier of the time veils the past and the future and the barrier of the place veils the present. These barriers are applicable to man's limited knowledge; they prevent them from knowing what he wants.

By contrast, the time and the place are two of Allah's creatures. His Omniscience is eternal and existent before the creation of the time and place. So, the effects of the time and places are not applicable to what preceded their creation. Thus, His saying, 'What will explain to you what the Crashing Blow is?' (*al-Qari'a*: 3) indicates that an event will take place in the future which is only known and controlled by Allah *Glorified is He*. No one knows that except Him because the time does not hinder His Knowledge.

We have touched on this matter in our interpretation of the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And do not say of anything: Surely I will do it tomorrow.' (*al-Kahf*: 23) This is because 'tomorrow' is a future time which is veiled by the barrier of the future. So, one should not decide to do something in the future except with adding: 'If Allah wills.' (*al-Kahf*: 24) The event or the action needs many elements: the doer, the object, the time, the place, the cause and the power that executes it. The human being possesses none of these elements. So, how can he say he will do an action without connecting it to the Will of Allah Who possesses all the causal factors?

يَوْمَ يَكُونُ النَّاسُ كَالْفَرَاشِ الْمَبْثُوثِ  
وَتَكُونُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ الْمَنْفُوشِ

**On a Day when people will be like scattered moths [4]  
and the mountains like tufts of wool [5]  
(The Quran, *al-Qari`a*: 4 - 5)**

The Crashing Blow will take place on a Day when the people will be like scattered moths. They will be in a state of panic, surging over each other, as they do not know where to go shortly after getting out of their graves. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Does he not know that when the contents of graves burst forth.' (*al-'Adiyat*: 9) and 'The day on which they shall come forth from their graves in haste, as if they were hastening on to a goal' (*al-Ma'arij*: 43). They will hastily come forth from their graves like the scattered moths. When they head towards the Gathering, they become like scattered locusts, as Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Their eyes cast down, going forth from their graves as if they were scattered locusts.' (*al-Qamar*: 7)

Allah *the Almighty* chooses the moths in the verse in question because they have fragile wings that can be smashed between one's fingers. This is the state of the dead people when they come out of their graves. They will be in the weakest of their states, totally confused and surging over each other like the flying moths. As for the locusts, they fly orderly in swarms.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* describes the state of what is stronger than man, namely the mountains, saying, 'and the mountains like tufts of wool.' (*al-Qari`a*: 5) In man's point of view, the mountains are the strongest phenomena when they turn to be like tufts of wool on the Day of Judgment. They will break up to tiny grains that the air scatters. Allah *the Almighty* then says:

فَأَمَّا مَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ ۖ فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَاضِيَةٍ

**The one whose good deeds are heavy on the scales [6]  
will have a pleasant life [7] (The Quran, *al-Qari`a*: 6 -7)**

Allah's Account is very precise and fair. The one whose good deeds are heavy on the scales are the successful one who obtains paradise. As for those

who followed Satan and their whims, the scales of their evil deeds are heavy. Consequently, they are the people of hell. Thus, the verses compare two kinds of people: The ones whose good deeds are heavy on the scales and the ones whose scales of evil deeds are heavy. The scales are heavy by doing good deeds and light by doing evil ones. Logically, there are three cases when there is a scale: one side is heavy, the other is light, or they are equal. The latter case is not mentioned in this chapter. The one whose good deeds overweigh the evil ones will go to paradise to have: '... a pleasant life.' (*al-Qari'a*: 7)

As the scales of the deeds are described as light and heavy, then this means that the deeds will have a mass with a weight. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, '... to be shown their deeds.' (*az-Zalzala*: 6) This is even though what will be shown is the recompense of the deeds. We notice that Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'scales' (*al-Qari'a*: 6) in the plural form instead of 'a scale' in the singular one. Why? This is because every kind of deed may have a special scale. For example, the prayer, spending wealth and pilgrimage will have a special scale, which will be accounted together.

Allah *the Almighty* then says 'will have a pleasant life.' (*al-Qari'a*: 7) The exegetes say that this means that the one who leads that life is well pleased with it. However, Allah *the Almighty* describes life itself as well pleased, though this description is only attributed to the sensible beings. So, according to the standards of our language, we say that the life is pleasant. However, Allah *the Almighty* substitutes the common way of expression in the human language with a manner of expression befitting the Eloquence of His Speech and the greatness of His Blessings and Favours on us.

We notice here the precedence of the miraculous Quranic style over the human one. The people in the worldly life love the blessings and the causes of happiness. However, the fear of losing them disturbs the people. This makes the person enjoys the present causes of happiness while worrying about the future - whether his happy condition will remain or not. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* wants to say to us, 'The anxiety of the one having blessings in the worldly life will not exist in the Hereafter'. This is because the Blessings in the Hereafter are related to the person and cannot leave them, as they are subjected to them. Besides, they accompany the person eternally out of being

well pleased with them. The one who is well pleased with something loves it and never leaves it. Thus, one should be reassured that the pleasure of the paradise will eternally accompany them; it never ceases to exist and one will never leave it.

The man will hold sway over his blissful life. In the worldly life, one's freedom is constrained according to Allah's Way of Guidance. By contrast, he has an unlimited freedom to enjoy the pleasures of the paradise once he thinks about one of them. This blissful life is stable and eternal because it is well pleased with accompanying the person. This is the difference between the blessings in the worldly life and in the Hereafter. In the former, the blessings may accompany the person while hating him. If Allah *Glorified is He* had not made them subservient to that person, they would not have stayed with them. He may eat a morsel while it is cursing them. This is because these inanimate objects are fulfilling their functions in life, even if man did not fulfil his. The blessings are displeased with such a person and yearn for leaving them.

In this connection, we have mentioned that 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* said after reading: 'So the heaven and the earth did not weep for them.' (*ad-Dukhan*: 29) 'Indeed, the heaven and the earth weep and feel happy.' As Allah *the Almighty* affirmed that the heavens and the earth did not weep for the people of Pharaoh, then this means that they weep for the departure of the believers. 'Ali added, 'When the son of Adam dies, one spot on the earth and another in the heaven weep for them. As for the spot on earth, it is the place of his prostration to Allah. As for the spot in the heaven, it is the place of the rising of his deeds.'

As for the exegetes who interpret His saying '*radiya*' (well pleased) with regard to life as *mardiyya* (pleasant), they did not reach part of the meaning that Allah *the Almighty* intended in the Quran. Further, their interpretation reduces Allah's Eloquent Speech to be consistent with human language. These exegetes should delve deeply into the meanings of the Quran to deduce more of its lofty rhetoric and arts of eloquence.

Contrary to those who will have a pleasant life, Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ ۚ فَأُمُّهُ هَاوِيَةٌ ﴿٨﴾  
وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا هِيَ ۖ نَارٌ حَامِيَةٌ ﴿٩﴾

**But the one whose good deeds are light [8] will have the  
Bottomless Pit for his home —[9] what will explain to you  
what that is?— [10] a blazing fire [11]  
(The Quran, *al-Qari'a*: 8 - 11)**

In these verses, there is another miraculous expression; the one whose good deeds are light and his evil deeds overweigh the good ones will have ‘...a Bottomless Pit for his home.’ (*al-Qari'a*: 10) The Arabic word *um-muhu* refers to his destination and ultimate return to which he will go, like the baby who returns to his mother’s bosom. The ‘Bottomless Pit’ (*al-Qari'a*: 10), is one of the names of hell into which its people are thrown. Then Allah *the Almighty* magnifies the mightiness of the Bottomless Pit, saying, ‘what will explain to you what that is?’ (*al-Qari'a*: 10) Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* says at the beginning of the chapter, ‘What will explain to you what the Crashing Blow is?’ (*al-Qari'a*: 3)

Here, the word is used to express a meaning broader than its linguistic one. So, we should not interpret the Bottomless Pit according to the meanings we are familiar with. As He *the Almighty* says, ‘what will explain to you what that is?’ (*al-Qari'a*: 10), then Allah *the Almighty* must intend a meaning beyond our human perception.

After saying, ‘what will explain to you what that is?’ (*al-Qari'a*: 10), Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘a blazing fire.’ (*al-Qari'a*: 11) The greatness of this style is manifested in the fact that the first part of the expression is hopeful while the latter is panicking. This is a psychosocial punishment that Allah *the Almighty* intends. This style is recurrent in the Quran, as He *the Almighty*, says, ‘... then give them the news of a painful punishment.’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 24) and ‘... And if they cry for water, they shall be given water like molten brass which will scald their faces ...’ (*al-Kahf*: 29). The first part of the verses is hopeful while the latter is panicking and disappointing. If the verse were frightening from its beginning, it would not produce that effect, that is, disappointment after hoping for goodness. A poet expressed this meaning, saying,

As a rainy cloud reached a thirsty people  
But once they saw it, it vanished.

In the chapter in question, Allah *the Almighty* says, '... will have a Bottomless Pit for his home.' (*al-Qari'a*: 9) The word *um-muhu* (literally, his mother) is used instead of saying, 'His recompense or destination is a Bottomless Pit'. The mother is the source of kindness, compassion and good treatment. So, mentioning this word is a hopeful start. Then Allah *the Almighty* reveals the intended meaning and concludes the expression by stating that his mother is the blazing fire. This is more painful and severer than the direct expression. We seek refuge in Allah *the Almighty* from His punishment and disappointment after hope.

Further, this expression indicates that the fire longs for its people and yearns for meeting them like a mother looking forward to embracing her child. Moreover, this expression alludes that the punished person did not take care of his mother in the worldly life and did not appreciate that great blessing that Allah *the Almighty* granted them when He instilled kindness, compassion, dedication, gentleness and benevolence in his mother. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* reminds them about this blessing to which he did not pay heed in the worldly life. In the Hereafter, the blazing fire will embrace them like a mother, saying, '...Are there any more?' (*Qaf*: 30) Thus, the Quranic expression: '... will have a Bottomless Pit for his home.' (*al-Qari'a*: 10), is a precise manner of expression containing many meanings related to the human soul and we should deduce them.

The verses are drawing a clear comparison between the one with heavy scales of good deeds and the one with light ones; and between the pleasant life and the blazing fire. This declarative comparison is about unseen matter meant to give the believer two blessings. The first is that he knows his high rank and position in the Hereafter including Allah's Pleasure with them and the pleasure of the blessings with them. The second blessing is to know the fate of the stubborn disbelievers, which will be the blazing fire. Thus, the believer realizes two blessings: his blissful fate and Allah's retaliation against his disbelieving opponent.

Further, the comparison pains the disbeliever in two facets: his knowledge about his evil fate in the Hereafter and the punishment waiting for him; and his knowledge about the blissful fate of his believing opponent. Thus, this manner of expression is used many times in the Quran, as it affirms the meanings intended by Allah *the Almighty*.

the chapter of

***at-Takathur***





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

**T**he chapter of at-Takathur<sup>(1)</sup>:

﴿١﴾ هَلْ كُنْتُمْ أَتْكَأْرُ ﴿٢﴾ حَتَّى زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ

**Striving for more distracts you [1] until you go into  
your graves [2] (The Quran, *at-Takathur*: 1-2)**

In the previous chapter, Allah *the Almighty* describes the Crashing Blow and what will happen on the Day of Judgment, including the event of scaling the deeds precisely, accurately and fairly. Afterwards, everyone receives the recompense of his deeds; the believer will have a pleasant life and the disbeliever will have a Bottomless Pit for his home. Accordingly, the wise person should receive the matters with their due carefulness and should not be preoccupied with the useless ones. He should not be distracted from the great matters by the trivial ones; from the pleasure of the Hereafter by his possessions in the worldly life, and from what is required from them by thinking about his fate. However, man is naturally heedless about these admonitions.

Thus, the chapter of *at-Takathur* followed that of *al-Qari`a* to say to us: ‘Striving for more distracts you.’ (*at-Takathur*: 1) This means that striving for

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(1) The chapter of *At-Takathur* consists of eight verses. It is the 102<sup>nd</sup> chapter in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca in reference to *Banu 'Abd Manaf* and *Banu Sahm*. They competed with each other in the number of dignitaries and masters. *Banu 'Abd Manaf* outnumbered *Banu Sahm*. Then they suggested counting their dead people. When they visited the graveyard, they counted the dead people and *Banu Sahm* outnumbered *Banu 'Abd Manaf* because their number in the pre-Islamic era was bigger. See Al-Wahidi, *Asbab An-Nuzul*, 1/490.

more wealth and other worldly matters distracted the people from the scales of the Account and the inevitable end waiting for you. The actions that make the good deeds light in the scales distracted the people from that which make them heavy. This is heedlessness on the part of the human being. In fact, it constitutes foolishness, deception and negligence of Allah's commands while he should seek his benefits and regains his heedfulness before the death suddenly seizes them.

This fact is not theoretical for it is a factual reality that makes the chapter relevant to the reality and the daily life's situations. The historians affirm that the people of 'Abd Manaf competed with the people of Sahm for worldly increase. The Arabic word *takathur* indicates the participation of two parties in the action of competing. This is similar to the example when we say, 'The two parties fought each other'. In this case, each of the parties is a subject and an object at the same time. Further, when we say 'Zayd and 'Amr quarrelled with each other', the quarrel is undertaken by both parties but one of them was considered the subject and the other the object. Likewise, the act of competing entails the participation of two parties. So, it is common that only one subject is mentioned with the verb denoting participation of more than one party. For instance, we may say '*Takathur al-qawm* (The people competed with each other for having more.)'

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Striving for more distracts you' (*at-Takathur*: 1) means that competing for increase in the worldly possession distracted the people from competing for doing good deeds for the Hereafter. The people may compete in how much wealth and possessions they have. One of them says, 'My wealth, children, and forefathers are more than yours.' Each one competes with other people, claiming to be worthier. Another possible interpretation is that some people strive and attempt to achieve such supremacy over other people.

According to the first interpretation, the wealth, which is the object of the competition, exists; and according to the second one, it is not. That is why they are required to strive to obtain it first and then boast about having it. In fact, the lifetimes may be spent in such endeavour without reaching the objective. However, Allah *the Almighty* intends the general meaning of

competition in increase; He does not say that the people are distracting by competing for their possessions or having more.

Distraction entails the existence of something occupying man's thought. It diverts the person from the required functions by unrequired ones. Playing is close to distraction in meaning for it means being occupied with trivial matters yet at not the expense of the important matters. When Allah *the Almighty* touches on the matter of distraction in the Quran, He mentions it after playing, as in His saying, 'Know that this world's life is only a play and a distraction ...' (*al-Hadid*: 20); except in one position where distraction precedes playing: 'And this life of the world is nothing but a distraction and a play, and as for the next abode, that most surely is the life - did they but know!' (*al-'Ankabut*: 64)

This is because man passes certain stages in his life. Before reaching puberty, playing does not distract them from the required obligations because he is still irresponsible for fulfilling the religious obligations. As one starts his life without any religious obligations, he plays at that stage. Despite that, Allah *the Almighty* does not say, 'you played', but rather, '... distracted you.' (*at-Takathur*: 1) This is because playing does not affect the religious obligations. As for distraction, it is forbidden because it diverts the person from the religious obligation by trivial matters. As for playing, it is permissible because it entertains the soul and gives it rest so that it does not feel bored. An example of this is playing on the *Eid* day. Further, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* watched the Abyssinians while they were playing and 'Aisha was behind him watching also.'<sup>(1)</sup> Besides, on one *Eid*, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* entered Messenger Muhammad's house and found two slave girls singing. Thereupon, he said, 'What! (The playing of) this wind instrument of Satan in the house of the Messenger of Allah!' Upon this, the Messenger of Allah said: 'Abu Bakr, let them play on, we are having an *Eid* day.'<sup>(2)</sup> These matters are lawful as long as they did not distract the person from the acts of obedience, and they should be in the time of *Eid*.

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(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 949; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 19/892.*

(2) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 949.*

One is free to do or not the do the permissible acts like eating. However, on the *Eid* of Breakfast is it obligatory to break fasting and it is unlawful to fast. The One who has forbidden you from eating during the day of *Ramadan* and rewarded you for fasting obligates you to break the fasting on the day of the *Eid* and allows you to play. One is rewarded for such actions. In conclusion, the meaning of His saying, 'Striving for more distracts you.' (*at-Takathur*: 1) is that the unnecessary, useless matters distracted the people from the necessary, useful ones.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, 'until you go into your graves.' (*at-Takathur*: 2) The competition in increase between the people of 'Abd Manaf and Sahm led them to compete in the number of their dead people, They went to the graveyard to take pride in its people. This is because the people of 'Abd Manaf outnumber the people of Sahm. So, the latter said, 'By Allah, our men have been annihilated by wars, so let us compete in both the number of the living and dead people.' So, His saying, 'until you go into your graves' (*at-Takathur*: 2), means that the people persisted in their heedlessness and distraction from the required obligations until they reached to this low rank of boasting about the number of the dead people, saying, 'The one in this grave belongs to us.' So, they visited the graves in order to know which party has a greater number of dead people.

Another possible interpretation is that this verse means that competing for the worldly increase distracted the people until their end came when death seized them suddenly. If they regained their heedfulness, it will be too late, for their lifetime has come and there is no returning back after death. Thus, both the interpretation is correct. We notice here that when an Arab person with good understanding of the Quranic indications and allusions listened to this chapter, he said, 'By the Lord of the *Kaba*, He announced people's death to them. By Allah, the Hour will be established when: 'Striving for more distracts you until you go into your graves.' (*at-Takathur*: 1-2) The matter is thus settled.

We understand from His saying, 'until you go into your graves.' (*at-Takathur*: 2) that, according to the first interpretation, they went to the graves to compete in the number of their dead people. The period they spend doing this action is

short because it is the period of visiting the graves after which they returned. According to the second meaning, competing distracted the people until death seized them suddenly.

Death is not the end of the created beings because it is followed by Resurrection, Account and another life. The time of staying in the graves is comparable to that of visitation because the visitor is not like the inhabitant. We have said that what distracts man from the required functions is heedlessness about the outcome of doing the evil deeds and abstaining from the good ones. If one recalls the recompense for each of these acts, he will not dare to commit the evil deeds and neglect the good ones. If we brought about the greatest illegal pleasure and told someone that we will throw them in a fire burning before them if he does it, he will not do it to avert risking his life. Now, why does he not fear or be deterred if he was threatened by Allah's fire? The scholars said that in the first case the image of the pleasure and its punishment is present and this strongly affects the soul. By contrast, the Fire in the Hereafter is unseen and deferred. So, the recompense in the Hereafter is unclear and does not have a strong effect on the soul due to its heedlessness. If man really recalled the punishment of the Hereafter, his joints would be displaced out of fearing Allah's Punishment.

Thus, the matter is all about certitude regarding the recompense. In this regard, when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked Harith ibn Malik about his state, he said, 'I become a true believer in Allah.' When he asked him about the proof of his faith, he said, 'I become indifferent to the worldly life so that everything is equal to me. It is as if I am looking to the people of paradise enjoying their pleasures and at the people of hell being punished.' In this way, he has elevated his certitude to the level of seeing the unseen matters as if they are before him. The one who recalls the image of the recompense in this way can never neglect Allah's Way of Guidance. In the same connection, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* portrayed people's states regarding the death, saying, 'I did not see a certain matter closer to doubt and further from certitude than death.' All the people are certain they will die, as the factual reality affirms; but heedlessness makes them in a state similar to doubt about it.

Now, what makes man distracted and heedless of the required obligations? We say that the news reported to us take three forms: a mental picture reaching to the level of certain knowledge, then elevates to the eye of certainty when one sees it, and, finally, it becomes the true certainty when he interacts with it. Regarding death, we reached the level of the true certainty. Despite that, man is still distracted from it to avert thinking about the recompense, the Paradise and the hell because they are still at the level of the certain knowledge. That is why the Quran treats this spiritual illness when Allah *the Almighty* says,

كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣﴾ ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤﴾ كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ  
الْيَقِينِ ﴿٥﴾ لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ ﴿٦﴾ ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ ﴿٧﴾  
ثُمَّ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٨﴾

**No indeed! You will come to know [3] No indeed! In the end you will come to know [4] No indeed! If only you knew for certain [5] You will most definitely see hellfire [6] you will see it with the eye of certainty [7] On that Day, you will be asked about your pleasures [8] (The Quran, *at-Takathur*: 3-8)**

The Arabic word *kalla* is a particle indicating reproach and determent. This means that the action of competing in increase that reached to visiting the graves is wrong and unreasonable to the sensible person who thinks wisely about the matters. Such an action displeases Allah *the Almighty* and is detrimental to the one who does it. When He *the Almighty* says, ‘... You will come to know’ (*at-Takathur*: 3), it is as if He is addressing some people who are doubtful about the level of certain knowledge. He does not only affirm the certain knowledge but also the eye of certainty, as paradise and hell will be presented to the people in their graves without entering them. Afterwards, when the Day of Judgment comes, and the people of the paradise and hell enter their respective places, they will reach the level of the true certainty: ‘You will see it with the eye of certainty.’ (*at-Takathur*: 7)

The usage of the particle *sawf* indicates two levels; the first one will take a period in the future and the second one will take a longer time, which is the eye of certainty. The people are different as to receiving the news from Allah

*the Almighty*. Some of them consider it a mental picture that could be true or false. Others are firm believers, believing in the truthfulness of the news and reaching the level of the true certainty once they read the verse. This is because they have confidence in what Allah *the Almighty* tells them.

The people will see hell with their eyes on the Day of Judgment; this is level of the eye of certainty to be followed by the true certainty, as in His saying, ‘And if he is one of the rejecters, the erring ones, he shall have an entertainment of boiling water. And burning in hell, most surely this is a certain truth. Therefore, glorify the name of your Lord, the Great.’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 92-95), unlike the disbeliever, the believer is exempted from experiencing the hellfire as a true certainty. The disbelievers have been told about it but they have not believed in the Last Day. If they had believed in the Day of Judgment, they would have only seen the punishment with the eye of certainty. If they had accepted the certain knowledge from Allah *the Almighty* about the hell and its punishment, they would have believed in it as if they saw it. This is because Allah *the Almighty* conveys the true image of the hell, which is the level of true knowledge. In the Hereafter, they will see the hell itself, which is the level of the eye of certainty. As for the real experience of hell, it is when they pass across the bridge set over it.

Out of Allah’s Mercy, Benevolence and Generosity, the believers have nothing to do with hell after crossing the bridge set over it and will be saved. That is why Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘On that Day, you will be asked about your pleasures.’ (*at-Takathur*: 8). The due right of the Blessings is to thank the One who bestows them. This exempts the person from being asked about it on the Day of Judgment. Allah *the Almighty* will question the people on whom the blessings have been conferred about them. In this regard, 'Abdullah ibn Az-Zubayr said, ‘When the verse “On that Day, you will be asked about your pleasures.” was revealed, the Companions said to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* “O Allah’s Messenger, which pleasures will we be asked about, for we only have dates and water?” He said, “Indeed, this will really happen.”’

The pleasures include the soundness of the body, hearing, and sight. Allah *the Almighty* will ask His servants on the Day of Judgment about how they

used them, though He knows best. Mujahid said that the pleasures in the verses refer to all the enjoyments of the worldly life. The following question will be the first to be posed to the man on the Day of Judgment, 'Have We not made your body well and provided you with cool water?



the chapter of

***al-'Asr***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-'Asr*<sup>(1)</sup> (The Sun).

Allah *the Almighty* says:



### By the declining day [1] (The Quran, *al-'Asr*: 1)

At the end of the chapter of *at-Takathur*, Allah *the Almighty* intends to deter us against competing in worldly, fleeting increase, whose ultimate benefit is confined to the worldly life. The worldly life is not the last stage of one's life, so Allah *the Almighty* directs our attention to compete in the eternal bliss and pleasure of the paradise instead of competing in the worldly increase. That is why He concludes the previous chapter, saying, 'On that Day, you will be asked about your pleasures.' (*at-Takathur*: 8) The people will be held accountable for the pleasures they enjoyed. After the Account, their deeds will be weighed and then they will be recompensed. Afterwards, one goes either to paradise or Hell. Thus, the wise person should take precaution by not competing except in something useful leading to the eternal goodness and bliss in the everlasting life. Such a person does not compete except in the matters that will make his scales of good deeds heavy on the Day of meeting with Allah *the Almighty*. When he will be asked about the pleasures, he will find the right answer to that question.

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(1) The chapter of *Al-'Asr* consists of three verses and 14 words. It is the 103<sup>rd</sup> chapter in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter to be revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *Ash-Sharh* and before *Al-'Adiyat*. See As-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan Fi 'Ulum Al-Quran*, 1/40.

Allah *the Almighty* has clarified for the human being one Straight Path leading directly to the objective. The straight path is the shortest between two points. Thus, if one wants to reach Allah's pleasure and the blessings of the paradise, he should follow the Divine Way of Guidance. It is the Straight Path that leads the person to the desirable destination without effort and tiredness. This is the only Path that leads to the blissful end and makes the scale of the good deeds heavy. Accordingly, the people are divided into two groups: one successful group that follows Allah's Way of Guidance, and another losing group that does not follow it. Therefore, the chapter of *Al-'Asr* was revealed to clarify this matter.

Allah *the Almighty* says, 'By the declining day.' (*al-'Asr*: 1) Allah *Glorified is He* swears by the declining day, as He takes an oath by whatever He wants about whatever He wishes. After all, He is the only Creator of everything and, therefore, knows the created beings and their secrets. As for the human beings, they are unaware of the greatness and the seriousness of certain creatures out of ignorance about them. In the Quran, the oath is either affirmative, as in His saying here: 'By the declining day.' (*al-'Asr*: 1), or negative, as in His saying, 'I swear not by Day of Resurrection.' (*al-Qiyama*: 1) Both styles lead to the same objective that is, affirming the subject of the oath. The difference is that Allah *the Almighty* employs the affirmative Oath to eliminate a misconception. As for the negative Oath, the matter related to it is clear and does not need an affirmation to eliminate a misconception, as in His saying, 'I swear not by Day of Resurrection.' (*al-Qiyama*: 1) This means that the matter is so obvious that it does not need an Oath. But if Allah *the Almighty* were to take an Oath about it, He would swear by such and such.

Let us give an example to illustrate this point; when the person feels ill, he goes to the doctor to prescribe some medicine after diagnosing them. Taking the medicine that eliminates the illness is an affirmation of the patient that he is ill. Likewise, when Allah *the Almighty* swears about an issue affirmatively, He refutes any misconception regarding it. However, when the doctor tells the person that he is not inflicted with any illness and needs no medicine, then this eliminates the possibility of being ill. One can be certain about his good health through his natural instinct without even seeing a doctor. Likewise,

when Allah *the Almighty* says, 'I swear not ...' (*al-Qiyama*: 1), this means that there is no misconception about the subject of the oath. However, if Allah *Glorified is He* employs an affirmative oath, then this is a confirmation of the existence of a misconception that needs to be refuted.

His saying 'By the declining day' (*al-'Asr*: 1), is an oath that affirms its subject, which is: 'man is [deep] in loss, except for those who believe, do good deeds, urge one another to the truth and urge one another to steadfastness.' (*al-'Asr*: 2-3) Now, what is the relation between the declining day and the subject of the oath? The scholars say that the declining day is an introduction to the ruling that man is deep in loss except those who believe and do good deeds. Or, it is a cause mentioned before the effect.

So, what is the meaning of the word '*asr*'? Its technical meaning is the act of worship called the afternoon prayer. This is the first meaning that comes to our mind when we hear this word. It is also the period between the noon and the sunset or a defined period of time that has a special feature. In the latter sense, it refers to the whole day or night, as the former has the distinctive feature of lightness and the latter is distinguished by darkness. Further, it refers to a longer period of time like weeks, months and years according to the specific features, descriptions and conditions that distinguish it from other periods, as we say, 'The pre-Islamic, the early Islamic, the Umayyad and the Abbasid, the present and the atom age.'

So, which of these meanings of the Arabic word '*asr*' does Allah *the Almighty* employ as an oath? If we considered the first technical meaning, the afternoon prayer, we find that the scholars say that Allah's saying, 'Attend constantly to prayers and to the middle prayer and stand up truly obedient to Allah.' (*al-Baqara*: 238), refers to the afternoon prayer – this is the preponderant view. Some other scholars say it is the noon, the sunset or the evening prayer. So, the meaning is common among all the prayers. Why? The scholars say that an object is described as 'middle' if it is between two ends. When the ends are defined, the middle is clarified. The first prayer to be obligated on us is the noon prayer, then the afternoon, the sunset, the evening and the dawn prayer. Therefore, the middle between these prayers is the sunset one. It is

preceded by the noon and the afternoon prayer and followed by the evening and the dawn prayer.

The scholars who maintain that the middle prayer is the noon one considered that the day is the time of toil and work, which is the time that man cares about. As for the night, it is the time of rest and sleep. As for those who hold it is the afternoon prayer, they regarded the Hadith in which Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘(Let) Allah fill their (i.e. the disbelievers’) houses and graves with fire just as they have prevented us from offering the middle prayer (i.e. afternoon prayer) till the sun had set.’<sup>(1)</sup> Further, these scholars say that the afternoon prayer is the middle one when we consider the times of the prayers, not how they were prescribed. It is preceded by the dawn and the noon prayer during the day and followed by the sunset and the evening during the night.

Further, the scholars who maintain it is the sunset prayer considered the number of the units of the prayers. The dawn prayer is two units, the noon, afternoon and the evening are four units. As the sunset prayer is three units, it is the middle between the two and the four units required in other prayers. Some scholars opine that it is the evening prayer because it is the middle between two prayers that cannot be shortened during travel, that is, the dawn and the sunset prayer. Other scholars still maintain it is the dawn prayer because it is between two open prayers – in which the Imam recites openly, the sunset and the evening prayer –and two secret ones, the noon and the afternoon prayer. Another stronger reason is that the dawn prayer is middle between the night and day. The noon and the afternoon prayers are offered during the day and the sunset and evening prayers are offered at night. The dawn prayer is between the night, as it is offered before sunrise, and the day, as it is offered after the daybreak.

Allah *the Almighty* wanted to make the meaning of the middle prayer vague so that the command of observing it includes all the prayers. This is beneficial to us, as it encourages us to observe them all, thinking that each of them is the

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(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 2931, 4111 and 6396; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 203/627.*

middle prayer. Further, when Allah *Glorified is He* commands to preserve it, He says, 'Attend constantly to prayers and to the middle prayer and stand up truly obedient to Allah.' (*al-Baqara*: 238) He generally commands us to keep up all the prayers and then specified the middle one. Thus, we should observe them all. Making the middle prayer vague is similar to the case of the Night of Glory. It is intended so that the benefit becomes common in all the nights. Further, the hour of accepting the invocation during Friday is vague, as this encourages the servant to invoke Allah at all times. This is beneficial to the servant, as it makes him connected all the time with his Lord.

Allah *the Almighty* takes an oath by the declining day, intending the specific time of offering the afternoon prayer, as it is offered at the last part of the day. At that time, man may be fully busy with finishing his work and thus distracted from that prayer. The declining day is also the time of man's daily outcome of deeds – whether he spent his time doing what is beneficial and good for them or wasted it. Thus, the afternoon is the time of the daily account for the deeds and that is why it is suitable that Allah *Glorified is He* swears by it. It is the time when we should hold ourselves accountable for our daily deeds. It is the time of joy and success for the one who has done good deeds; and the time of regret for the one who has fallen short in doing good, beneficial deeds.

This is the interpretation of the verse even if the word '*asr*' refers to the day or the night, as the poet said,

The day and night do not last long

If one seeks to reach his objective during them

At the end of the day, we should account the deeds we have done and those we left undone. Further, we can use the word '*asr*' to refer to a longer period of time, like many years. Man lives many ages in his lifetime. Each age has a beginning and end. During its period, many events took place like the civilizations that were established and then perished. The person is required to reflect on these events. The civilizations that flourished were established because they had the causal factors of flourishing. As for the collapsing civilizations, they are the ones that abandoned these factors. Further, the causes of destruction inflicted them as a result of their people's heedlessness of the

causes of sustaining their civilization. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* swears by the declining day in order to show us the importance of reading history and reflecting on the current affairs and reality. Then Allah *Glorified is He* give us the effective prescription for the sustenance of the nations and their advancement and flourishing, saying:

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ ﴿٢﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا  
الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَّصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَّصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ ﴿٣﴾

**Man is [deep] in loss [2] except for those who believe, do good deeds, urge one another to the truth, and urge one another to steadfastness [3] (The Quran, *al-'Asr*: 2-3)**

In these two verses, Allah *the Almighty* summarizes the general principle for the sustenance of the nations and the civilizations. If we review history in the light of this principle, we will find it is true. We have here three conditions that should be met in order that the societies prevail and flourish. If one of these conditions were not met, the whole society would lag behind. The first one is the firm belief, the second is the good deeds and the third is urging each other to truth and steadfastness.

The general principle which is the subject of Divine Oath is: 'Man is [deep] in loss.' (*al-'Asr*: 2) The word 'man' here is a general word referring in the Quran to either a person or a group. The loss is a general ruling from which no one is exempted except those who fulfil three conditions:

The first condition is belief, which is a creedal matter and a principle that should be firm in the soul and the consciousness. As it is firmly established in the heart, we call it a creed. We have clarified that the creed is related to the unseen matters, not the tangible matters or man's opinion or thought. For example, one should not say, 'I believe I see you in front of me', rather one should believe in Allah, His Angels, Books, Messengers, the Last Day and Predestination, be it good or evil. All these matters are unseen like the matters of the Hereafter, including the Recompense, paradise, Hell, the Balance and the Bridge. We believe in these matters because Allah *the Almighty* has told us about them.



Belief in the unseen matters distinguishes the believer from the disbeliever. As for the tangible matters are perceivable, all the people believe in them. The disbeliever only believes in what he sees and perceives. By contrast, the believer has a different balance by which he weighs the matters up, namely the creed. If something is beyond the human perception, this does not mean it is non-existent, a fact which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And in your own souls (too); will you not then see?' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 21) We believe that the soul consists of a body and a matter taken from the earthly elements. Besides that, the soul contains the secret that the Creator instilled in it, that is, the Spirit that gives us life. Although is it beyond the human senses, we believe in it because Allah *the Almighty* told us that it is existent even if we cannot perceive it.

If we are unable to perceive a simple creature, how can we hope to perceive the great Creator? Thus, out of His Greatness, He is unseen to us and our senses cannot perceive Allah *Glorified is He*. Should we be able to perceive Him, it is not befitting that He is a God. Thus, the creed is only related to the unseen matters starting with belief in Allah. This is the essential pillar of faith that man can attain to through his mind. After believing in the Existence of the One, the Single and the Self-Sufficient God, one should believe in His Majestic and Beautiful Attributes, including His Omnipotence, Ever-Watchfulness and Wisdom. At the end of the day, we will all return to Allah *Glorified is He*. Afterwards, we believe in the rest of the unseen matters that Allah *the Almighty* has told us about, like the existence of the Angels, the Books, the Messengers, etc.

Therefore, the creed is of two kinds: the original, basic belief which is to have faith in Allah *the Almighty*. The second kind is based on the original belief, that is, what Allah *the Almighty* has told us. We should believe in the matters He tells us whether they are related to the unseen world or the seen one. Consequently, the person should accept Allah's Way of Guidance and follow it, making it the only source for what he does or abstains from. It should be the source of help and power by which one confront the difficulties in life, as one cannot face them with his limited power. Accordingly, he should face them with the power of faith and confidence in the true God in whom he believes. However, the difficulties of life are severe, the believer will overcome them.

That is why Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And whoever fears Allah - He will make for him a way out and will provide for him from where he does not expect.' (*at-Talaq*: 2-3) The causal factors cease to exist, betray and deceive the person. Thus, the only Supporter is the Ultimate Causer. So, faith enriches the soul. According to one's faith, he recognizes that the universe, including the inanimate objects, the plants and the animals, are subjected to serve him, whether he can control these creatures or not. One should rest, reassured as the universe will not rebel against him because it is created for man and he owns it on account of Allah's vicegerency that was granted to him. One should be confident that the universe will not rebel against his vicegerency. This is another privilege for man besides Allah's honouring him by making him a human being.

Faith also entails that the man recognizes that all the people are servants to Allah *the Almighty* like them – all worshipping the only One God. None of them is His son, and none of this has a genealogical relation with Him. All human beings are equal and nothing makes some of them excel others except piety and righteous deeds. All the creatures participate in worshipping Allah *the Almighty* Who has no wife or child. Accordingly, all the believers have one Way of Guidance. None of them consider themselves superior to the other. They are all servants to Him *the Almighty* and free in their actions. No one of them should had grudge against another one because Allah *Glorified is He* provides all of them with sustenance. In this way, the brotherhood and cooperation between the Muslims in one society prevail, as it is governed by one Way of Guidance. In this regard, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'A Muslim is a Muslim's brother. He does not wrong, desert or despise him.'<sup>(1)</sup> And 'the relationship of the believer with another believer is like (the bricks of) a building, each strengthens the other.'<sup>(2)</sup>

Thus, belief in Allah as the ultimate source of Power and Provision Who will hold the person accountable makes the man reassured in his life. He takes

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Umar Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 2442 and 6951; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 58/2580.*

(2) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Ibn Abu Musa Al-'Ash'ari Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 481, 2446 and 6026; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 65/2585.*

pride in it and does not submit before its hardships or feels weak. This is because he has a Lord in Whom he believes and upon Whom he relies regarding alleviating his hardship and making his matters easy. Further, as we believed in Allah and accepted Him as our Lord, Creator and Provider, we should not follow any way in life except His. This is because the man-made way leads to various paths according to people's whims. As for Allah's Way of Guidance, it is a comprehensive Way that eliminates the whims of the souls and makes all the people equal. It should be followed because it achieves safety and security on the individual and the social level. This is because every individual believes that he will be held accountable and recompensed by Allah *the Almighty* Alone, not by anyone else.

As one believes in Allah *the Almighty* he is not a double-faced person. He does not deal with the people hypocritically or deceives them. This is because he believes in Allah's saying, 'He knows the stealthy looks and that which the breasts conceal.' (*Ghafir*: 19) He regards Allah *Glorified is He* in his deeds and not the people. This is the most important condition for the advancement of the societies.

The worldly life is not the last stage in one's life, for there is another eternal life to come. The people will be returned to Allah *the Almighty* to be recompensed for their deeds. Indeed, the worldly life is only a bridge for reaching the Hereafter. Holding that belief, the believer will receive the events in his life with a content soul which is reassured about Allah's Predestination and Decree. He will not be sad if something bad afflicted them and will not be deceived by the bounties given to them. He knows that the bounties and the calamities constitute a test from Him *the Almighty*. Thus, he does not feel anxious when a hardship befalls him because he has a Lord Who creates and provides and is fully able to alleviate his hardship for him.

These distinctive features of the believer are conditional on the perfection of belief because Allah *the Almighty* says, '... and you shall have the upper hand if you are believers.' (*Al-Imran*: 139) The believer has the upper hand because his connection with Allah *Glorified is He* is strong. If he loses one pillar of belief, he will descend to a lower position and become weak. In this connection, the people of Musa (Moses) said to him: '... Most surely we are being

overtaken.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 61) They feared that Pharaoh and his hosts would overtake them. Thereupon, Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'By no means; surely my Lord is with me: He will give me a way out.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 62) He regarded his belief and spoke with full confidence that Allah *the Almighty* would grant him victory.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* directs our attention from belief and the theoretical creeds to the practical application through the good deeds. His saying, 'except for those who believe, do good deeds (*al-'Asr*: 3), makes the good deeds a condition for the correctness of belief. So, after discussing the first condition, belief, we are now touching on the second one, the good deeds. The first good deeds are the act of worships that Allah *the Almighty* has prescribed, even if we do not see their imminent benefits. Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* has set the laws of transactions between the individuals and the groups. These laws organize people's activities and the relations between the members of the societies.

In atheist countries, these Divine Laws are called systems. Even if the fact of Allah's Existence is absent, certain systems must exist. However, we must differentiate between the Islamic transactions and the man-made systems. The Islamic transactions are acts of worship that Allah *the Almighty* has prescribed to organize people's activities in the Muslim society. As for the man-made systems, the religious law should accept what is in the interest of the people and reject the unsound systems that do not befit a Muslim society. The religious law may modify some of these systems to make them suitable to the Muslim society.

In this connection, we find that Islam accepted some systems that preceded it, prohibited others and modified the rest because they are man-made laws. As for what Allah *the Almighty* has prescribed, it should be fully accepted without doubt or thought. It is Allah *the Almighty* Who commands the people to worship Him in certain ways and no one has the right to worship them in a way Allah *Glorified is He* did not legislate. One can do extra acts of worships if they are sub-categorized under the legislated ones. For example, one can pay 5% of his wealth as prescribed alms instead of 2.5%. Further, he may fast on Mondays and Thursdays besides the obligatory fasting of *Ramadan*.

Thus, the good deeds are the actions that Allah *the Almighty* prescribed for His servants as acts of worship or transactions in order to maintain the soundness of their activities in life, whether these transactions were initiatively prescribed or accepted or modified from man-made systems. We should reflect on the different transactions in the world and compare the Islamic Laws that Allah *the Almighty* legislated to the similar man-made laws regarding the family, the politics or the economy. We will find that the reality compelled the lawmakers to get closer to the Islamic Laws or imitate it totally in some laws. For example, the communistic and capitalistic systems had to abandon some of the theories they believed in, resorting to solutions consistent with the Islamic thought. Likewise, the issues of life and organizing the family life compelled them to introduce the Islamic divorce system, after attacking and rejecting it for a long time. This is because Islamic Laws are comprehensive and general; it is a supreme Law that encompasses all the conditions and the situations.

As for the acts of worship, it is beyond the realm of thought because Allah *the Almighty* has commanded us to do them as such. Thus, we must comply with this command out of our confidence in the Lawgiver. It makes us execute the commands without seeking to know their reasons. About eating pork, Allah *the Almighty* has forbidden us from eating it. To do a good deed in this case, one should abstain from it even if he does not know the reason behind its prohibition. If we waited until we discover the reason, we would have suspended this good deed for fourteen centuries until the present time when we scientifically discovered the harms of pork. Thus, our confidence in the Wisdom the Lawgiver made us apply the ruling without any disputation. In fact, belief entails accepting the commands and the prohibitions with obedience and submission. Afterwards, the development of life will uncover the reason for prescribing them. However, we should not waste our energy searching for the reasons. Otherwise, one would renege the original reason that is, belief in Allah *the Almighty*.

If one believes and do good deeds, heedlessness may block his way to his desirable objective. Thus, there should be a third element, which is: 'urge one another to the truth, and urge one another to steadfastness.' (*al-'Asr*: 3) The soul naturally is prone to be heedless of Allah's Way of Guidance. Further, the impulses and the whims may overwhelm it, distracting it from the Right

Way. Thus, it needs what eliminates its heedlessness and makes it regain its heedfulness and return to the right way.

The Arabic word *tawasau* (to urge one another) indicates the participation of the members of the society in this action. Each member of the society is at one time urging and at another time urged. All members of the society reciprocally urge the ones who are inflicted with heedlessness among them. It is a collective mission for all the members of the society. Afterwards, some obstacles that need steadfastness will face us. Consequently, we must urge each other to be steadfast. If we gather these three elements, we complete Allah's Way of Guidance through believing, doing good deeds, whether they are acts of worship or transactions. If we follow that by urging each other to truth and steadfastness, we will succeed and be exempted from those who are in deep loss. However, if we neglected these principles, we are included in the fold of loss.

The Arabic word *tawasi* indicates exerting effort in advising and helping the one who needs advice. This ensures the desirable outcome of the advice that makes the advised one clings to the truth and the faithful principle that he was heedless of. Urging each other is the third principle of the successful Call. Naturally, the principles constrain one's freedom and activity while he wants to be absolutely free to satisfy his desires. However, the religious obligations and the principles constrain his activities in life. Indeed, this needs urging one another to steadfastness so that we mutually help one another to obey Allah *the Almighty*.

We have previously said that if the human being recalls the reward of the obedience, its hardship will be considered easy. The problem with the deeds is that we consider their hardship apart from their reward, making us regard the obedience as a heavy burden. After being inflicted with heedlessness after another, our hearts will be veiled from light and insight. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Nay! Rather, what they used to do has become like rust upon their hearts.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 14) The heart will not recognize what is good or reject what is abominable. If this behaviour spread in the society, it will collapse and be corrupt. Consequently, we should recognize the importance of urging to truth and steadfastness in the society and the importance of the collective responsibility and taking care of other people's safety to avert their falling in temptations.

The word *tawasa* means to give advice and not an order. The advice carries the meanings of gentleness and leniency in asking for something. As it is offered to the person that one loves, it will tend to be acceptable and obeyed. Urging those whom we love is related to many matters like treating the people well and working hard. As for urging to the truth, it means urging them to abide by Allah's Way of Guidance because it is the absolute truth.

When we review the word *tawasa* in the Quran, we find it is used regarding Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) where Allah *the Almighty* says, 'and the same did Ibrahim (Abraham) enjoin on his sons and (so did) Ya'qub (Jacob). O my sons! Surely Allah has chosen for you (this) faith, therefore die not unless you are Muslims.' (*al-Baqara*: 132) The time of giving advice is long but it might be short when one is about to die, as in the advice of Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob) *peace be upon him* while he was dying. He was keen on giving advice to his children. In this regard Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Nay! were you witnesses when death visited Ya'qub (Jacob), when he said to his sons, "What will you serve after me?"' (*al-Baqara*: 133)

The most important thing that Ya'qub (Jacob) *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to be reassured about before departing the worldly life is the Way of Guidance that his sons would follow. He did not pay attention to their mundane conditions like provision and wealth. Rather, he said: '... "What will you serve after me?" They said, "We will serve your God and the God of your fathers, Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) and Ya'qub (Jacob), one God only, and to Him do we submit."' (*al-Baqara*: 132) Allah *the Almighty* presents the advice of the father to the sons because it is the most truthful and sincere advice, as the father can never deceive his sons. Rather, he gives them the outcome of his experience and leads them to the right way that reforms their affairs.

In this connection, Luqman said to his son: 'And when Luqman said to his son while he admonished him, "O my son! do not associate aught with Allah; most surely polytheism is a grievous iniquity ... O my son! keep up prayer and enjoin the good and forbid the evil, and bear patiently that which befalls you; surely these acts require courage."' (*Luqman*: 13, 17) This is an example of urging to truth which is the desirable Way that the adviser had experienced and wants his son, the most beloved one to him, to abide by it.

Urging to truth and steadfastness has many incidents in the Islamic history. In the era of the rightly guided Caliphs, we saw Abu Bakr and 'Umar advising their subjects on the first day of their reign. Their reign after the death of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* made the people fear the position of the caliphate. This could lead the people to forsake their rights or be heedless of the Muslims affairs. Both were keen on raising the subjects' awareness of their rights, encouraging them to ask for them and to hold the Caliph accountable after observing his actions and orders. The subjects would accept the right decision and reject the wrong ones, criticizing the Caliphs for their mistakes.

In this connection, Abu Bakr said, 'I have been appointed as your Caliph, but I am not the best among you. So, if my actions are good, then help me; but if they are bad, then correct me. Obey me as long as I obey Allah regarding you. If I disobey Him, you are not required to obey me.' Likewise, 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab said, 'what would you do if I diverted from the right way.' One man stood up and said, 'If we witness any diversion in you, we will reform you with our swords.' 'Umar laughed and said, 'Praise is due to Allah because he made among Muhammad's *ummah* those who reform 'Umar's diversion with their swords.'

Furthermore, the Caliphs throughout the Islamic ages were keen on advising the governors before sending them to the place of their governorship, providing them with the principles of dealing with the subjects. This is meant in order that the governorship does not make them acts tyrannically, appropriating the subjects' rights and wronging them. In this regard 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb advised Malik ibn Al-Ashtar, who was appointed as the governor of Egypt, saying, 'you should know, Malik that I have charged you with a country where just and unjust states had been established. The people will observe your affair like the governors before you and will say about you what you had said about them. The affairs of the governors are known by what the subjects say about them. Make the good deeds the most beloved thing you own and be merciful, kind and benevolent towards the subjects. Do not be like a wild lion appropriating their rights. They are either your brothers in faith or counterparts in creation. They are prone to make many mistakes and are overwhelmed with problems. They do certain actions deliberately or unintentionally. So, pardon them and forgive their mistakes inasmuch as you



want Allah to pardon and forgive you. You have the upper hand over them and the Caliph is over you and Allah is watchful over the one who appointed you.' Thus, the Caliphs were keen on advising the governors because the subjects will be good if the governors are good. That is why Al-Hasan Al-Basri used to say, 'If I had one acceptable supplication with Allah, I would dedicate it to the governor.' When he was asked about that, he said, 'This is because his righteousness reforms many people.'

Besides they are many incidents in the Islamic history of urging for steadfastness. This is because the advice is often confronted and its giver is harmed, as in the case of Sa'id ibn Al-Musayyib, Sa'id ibn Jubayr, Al-Imam Malik, Ash-Shafi'i, Ahmad and Abu Hanifa. All these scholars were tested on account of their religion, but they were steadfast and spoke the truth. They urged to truth and were steadfast in it. The tyranny, authority and power did not divert them, nor did the worldly life and its adornments allure them.

I think you are aware of the trial of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in the matter of the creation of the Quran during the reign of Al-Ma'mun and Al-Mu'tasim. He was steadfast in following the truth and held that the Quran is not created, despite being imprisoned and tortured. Most of the scholars in his time took the side of the state and believed in the creation of the Quran. This is an example of urging to truth and steadfastness.

If the principles of the chapter of *al-'Asr* are applied to the ages throughout history, we will find them true. The nations and the civilizations that adopted these principles and met the conditions were successful and flourishing. When they did not fulfil one of the principles they deteriorated and perished. For example, Allah *the Almighty* says regarding the story of the people of Saba': 'Certainly there was a sign for Saba' in their abode; two gardens on the right and the left; eat of the sustenance of your Lord and give thanks to Him: a good land and a Forgiving Lord! But they turned aside, so We sent upon them a torrent of which the rush could not be withstood, and in place of their two gardens We gave to them two gardens yielding bitter fruit and (growing) tamarisk and a few lote-trees. This We requited them with because they disbelieved; and We do not punish any but the ungrateful.' (*Saba'*: 15-17) This civilization reached the climax of development and attracted people's

attention. Now, what made it collapse? This is because it did not abide by the factors of sustenance, which are the firm creed, the good deeds and urging to truth and steadfastness. This is also the case with the civilisation of the Pharaohs, the people of `Ad, Thamud, Nuh (Noah) and Lut (Lot). In the present age, the Muslims are backward because they abandoned these factors and were heedless of them. That is why the enemies seized them from every direction.

the chapter of

***al-Humaza***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Humaza* <sup>(1)</sup> :

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ ۚ (١) الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ. (٢)  
يَحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ. (٣)

**Woe to every fault-finding backbiter [1] who amasses  
riches, counting them over [2] thinking they will make  
him live for ever [3] (The Quran, *al-Humaza*: 1-3)**

This chapter directs our attention to wealth which is one of the blessings of life and is highly regarded in the worldly life. This chapter indicates that wealth may change its owner and alter his criterion for the affairs. As he acts arrogantly with the people, he wrongly assesses them. As he has wealth, he admires the wealthy people and holds them in a high position, even if they are the wicked people. By contrast, he despises the poor even if they are righteous and pious.

Allah *the Almighty* directs our attention to this matter, saying, ‘Woe to every fault-finding backbiter.’ (*al-Humaza*: 1) The word ‘woe’ is like the term ‘the Crashing Blow’; it has a linguistic and a technical meaning. Linguistically, it means perdition and technically it refers to a valley in hell.

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(1) The chapter of *Al-Humaza* consists of nine verses. It is the 104<sup>th</sup> chapter in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *Al-Qiyama* and before that of *Al-Mursalat*. It is the 30<sup>th</sup> chapter in the order of revelation. It is one of three chapters beginning with a supplication against the wicked people along with *Al-Mutaffifin* and *Al-Masad*.

From its extreme heat, hell itself seeks refuge. We consider both meanings here because Allah *the Almighty* is threatening in this verse and thus His Threat is true and will inevitably come to pass. This is because He is Omnipotent and has the Power to execute His Threat, for no one can prevent it.

The one who listens to this Threat should recall its image as if it is happening before his eye. If a normal person threatened someone else, the latter might not take heed of that threat because the former does not possess the power to carry out his threat. He neither possesses the causal factor nor guarantees he will live to carry out his threat. If he lived, he cannot be sure of the sustenance of power that enables them to do that action. Further, his threatened opponent may grow in power and become stronger than the one who threatened them. Accordingly, the latter will not be able to execute his threat. He would have no causal factor for doing that action.

By contrast, if Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Woe to every fault-finding backbiter.' (*al-Humaza*: 1), the threat will inevitably come to pass and no one of the fault-finding backbiters will escape from this fate. After all, no one can rebel against Allah's Kingdom and Sovereignty. His saying, '... fault-finding backbiter' (*al-Humaza*: 1), includes intensified attributes. The words *humaza* and *lumaza* refer to the one who finds faults in someone else's creation, character, social status behaviours, etc. The difference between *humaza* (fault-finding) and *lumaza* (backbiter) is that the former refers to the one who defames the people openly while the latter refers to the one who slanders them stealthily through a gesture with the eye or the tongue or through imitating someone else's movement to make fun of them. The two descriptions indicate that the person does this inappropriate behaviour often to the extent that it became one of his inherent qualities.

The fault-finding backbiter is described as: 'who amasses riches, counting them over.' (*al-Humaza*: 2) This description provides us with the grounds for his inappropriate behaviour. His wealth made him descend to that low position of defaming the people and slandering them. His saying, '...counting them over' (*al-Humaza*: 2) means that he is preoccupied with counting his wealth. From time to time, he gets it out, counts it, and returns it once again, as the stingy people who hoard wealth do. He is allured by

wealth, thinking that he is superior to all the people. That is why he proceeded to make fun of the people and slander them.

The scholars discuss the matter of whether the verses are revealed in reference to a specific person or are they a general principle. Those who hold they were revealed in reference to a specific person said that he is Abu Lahab. Other scholars say that the verses are general. It is not important to know the person regarding whom it was revealed. What is important is that the ruling of the verses is applicable to all those who have the same qualities. If a person were specified, he would be an example for that ruling. There are certain rulings which depend on a general description and others depending on specific persons. The difference between the two cases is that the ruling in the former case is applicable to all the individuals who share the same descriptions. It is not confined to a certain person. As for the ruling depending on specific person, the ruling is only applicable to them and is not recurrent. So, the threat and the condemnation in the verses are not related to a specific person but rather they are generally applicable. The one who has these descriptions is included in this threat. Thus, the ruling is not confined to one specific person due to a certain incident.

In this regard, we find some exegetes exerted a great effort in searching for the names of the People of the Cave and their number – to the extent that they tried to know the name of their dog, the time and the place of the story. In this way, they were distracted from the objective of the story and introduced the Israelites narrations in it. If it had been mentioned in detail, this would have affected the context of the story. This is because if Allah *the Almighty* had willed to mention these details, He would have done so. Instead, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to give us an example of the faithful youths who were small in number. Despite that, they did not pay heed to the dangers and sacrificed themselves for the sake of their principles and creed. It is not important to know the characters, their time and place. If these details were defined, some people would say that they did such and such for special nature and no one can imitate them. If the time were defined, they would say this was possible because their time allowed it.

Thus, wisdom entails the mention of the story as a general one applicable to all times, places and groups of youths who sacrifice themselves for the sake of

their creed. Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘... surely they were youths who believed in their Lord and We increased them in guidance. And We strengthened their hearts with patience, when they stood up and said, “Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth; we will by no means call upon any god besides Him, for then indeed we should have said an extravagant thing.”’ (*al-Kahf*: 13-14)

Further, if there is a cause of revelation for a story, you should not think that the cause is the reason why the story was revealed. In fact, the cause is just a suitable start for the revelation. This is similar to the case when a circumstantial incident takes place and makes us set a law for it. In this case, the law is not specific to this incident but rather it is generally applicable to all the similar incidents.

In the chapter in question, His saying, ‘Woe to every fault-finding backbiter’ (*al-Humaza*: 1), indicates generality, as the scholars say, ‘The consideration is given to the generality of the wordings and not the specificity of the cause’. Thus, the ruling in the verse is applicable to the person who is the cause of the incident as well as to all those who have these qualities.

As for His saying, ‘thinking they will make him live forever.’ (*al-Humaza*: 3), this means that he wrongly thinks his wealth will give them immortality. This is contrary to the factual reality, as we witness cases of death and know for sure we will die. It is possible that the intended meaning is that abundant wealth became one of his inherent, established qualities.

It is well known that wealth is something circumstantial; one gains it at times and loses it at other times. This is the problem with wealth, that is, one cannot guarantee that he will possess it forever. As for the person mentioned in the verses in question, he thinks that his wealth will not leave him in any way. Accordingly, his wealth hardens his heart further, and makes him more niggardly. As a matter of fact, spending some of the wealth softens the heart. One should take into account that having wealth is not permanent. Consequently, he should spend some of what he possesses to later find someone to give him should he become in need. Hence, the verses deter and reproach the person who is allured by his wealth.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:



كَلَّا لَيُنْبَذَنَّ فِي الْحُطَمَةِ ﴿٤﴾ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحُطَمَةُ ﴿٥﴾  
 نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمَوْفِدَةُ ﴿٦﴾ الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ ﴿٧﴾  
 إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّوَصَّدَةٌ ﴿٨﴾ فِي عَمَدٍ مُمَدَّدَةٍ ﴿٩﴾

**No indeed! He will be thrust into the Crusher! [4]  
 What will explain to you what the Crusher is? [5] It is God's  
 Fire, made to blaze [6] which rises over people's hearts [7]  
 It closes in on them [8] in towering columns [9]  
 (The Quran, *al-Humaza*: 4 - 9)**

These verses contain two expressions which are frequently used in the Quran, that is, 'By no means!' and 'What will explain to you?' Actually, this is the last position in the Quran where they were mentioned. The Arabic word '*kalla*' (by no means) deters the person who thinks that his wealth will give him immortality. This is because wealth is a fleeting, ceasing pleasure; even if it chooses to remain with its owner, the owner himself will leave it when he dies. That is why it is said to the man who amassed an abundant wealth, 'Have you amassed the lifetime required to spend all that wealth?' How can wealth make him immortal while it is fleeting and circumstantial?!

The context of the verses befits the beginning of the chapter with His saying: 'Woe...' (*al-Humaza*: 1). We interpret it as a Threat from Allah *the Almighty* Who is fully Able to undertake His Threat as His slaves are under His Full Control. Here, He *Glorified is He* says: '...He will be thrust (*yunbadhann*) into the Crusher!' (*al-Humaza*: 4) The word '*nabdha*', from which the word '*yunbadhanna*' (thrust) comes, means 'to throw something in a way that shows how underrated and valueless it is'. The one who slanders and mocks people due to looking down on them will be recompensed with a befitting punishment. He will be thrust into the Crusher in a humiliating and degrading way. If only he had just been deprived of the pleasures of paradise and having intimacy with his Lord; however, he will be thrown into the Crusher that smashes all that is thrown into it. As he exceeded the limits, throwing words that mocked the people and slandered them, his bones will be severely crushed. The Crusher is also the befitting punishment for the one who collected and hoarded wealth and stingily

refused to spend it. Moreover, out of the severity of the punishment of woe, it is mentioned in the chapter in question before the sin incurring it is actually mentioned.

With regards to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'What will explain to you what the Crusher is?' (*al-Humaza*: 5), the question indicates that the word 'Crusher' should not be regarded in the light of its linguistic meaning of smashing something. In fact Allah *the Almighty* uses it to refer to a meaning beyond human perception. Then He *Glorified is He* clarifies its meaning, saying: 'It is the Fire of Allah, kindled [to blaze]' (*al-Humaza*: 6). The fire here is not attributed to a human being but rather to Allah *the Almighty*. The measure of the fire and its blazing are suitable to the One Who lights it. If the fire is attributed to Allah *the Almighty* how great it will be! We seek refuge in Allah from His punishment and the evil of His slaves. In this connection, we remember the story in which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* supplicated against 'Utayba ibn Abu Lahb, saying, 'May one of Allah's dogs devour him'.<sup>(1)</sup> What was that dog? It was a lion that seized him while he was among the people. Allah's dog cannot be anything but a lion.

Likewise, Allah's Fire is so powerful that no one can extinguish or prevent it or save anyone who has been thrown into it. Furthermore, it is made to blaze and is ready to burn. The word 'fire' adequately indicates that the fire is blazing, and this fact was further emphasized by His saying: '...kindled [to blaze]' (*al-Humaza*: 6). This means that it is blazing very strongly.

As for His saying: '...which rises over people's hearts' (*al-Humaza*: 7), it means that the fire will keep burning and crashing them until it reaches their hearts. It makes them suffer to a similar amount the people they

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(1) 'Utayba ibn Abu Lahab divorced Umm Kulthum, Prophet Muhammad's daughter. He came to the Prophet and said, 'I disbelieved in your religion and divorced your daughter. There is no mutual love between us'. Then he attacked Prophet Muhammad and tore his shirt. Thereupon, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'I invoke Allah to dispatch a dog against him'. This Hadith is narrated by Al-Haythami who attributed it to At-Tabarani through a loose (*Mursal*) chain of narrators, saying, 'One of the narrators is Zuhayr ibn Al-A'la', who is a weak narrator'. It was also narrated by Al-Hakim on the authority of Abu 'Aqrab. He graded this Hadith as authentic while Ibn Hajar graded it as good. See Al-Bayhaqi, *Dala'il An-Nubuwwa*, 2/338-229; Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, 2/539; and Ibn Hajar, *Fath Al-Bari*, 4/39.

slandered and defamed suffered. The heart is mentioned here because it is the home of the intentions of deeds. All the organs follow what the heart wishes. As the hearts of those wicked people are the source of their misdeeds, the fire rises over them and penetrates inside them.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘It closes in on them’ (*al-Humaza*: 9). This means that the doors of the fire will be locked up and that is why no one thinks of escaping from it. Just as this wicked person hoarded his wealth and put it inside a safe, the fire will close in on him. And just as he, due to his wealth, hoped to live for a long time, the columns of fire that close in on him are long and towering. The Lord *Glorified is He* then says: ‘...in towering columns’ (*al-Humaza*: 9). The meaning is that they will be tied up in columns or that the fire is locked up with long, massive columns for no one to be able to escape or find a way out. This actually shatters the disbelievers’ hope of salvation.

Clearly, the punishment is the consequence of the crime; every type of crime is punished with a suitable type of punishment. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and Allah was not unjust to them, but they were unjust to themselves’ (*an-Nahl*: 33). We invoke Allah to purify our tongues and hearts, to protect our limbs and to safeguard us from the characteristics that incur that punishment in order for us to become worthy of His Love, Mercy, Pleasure and paradise.



the chapter of

***al-Fil***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Fil*<sup>(1)</sup> (The Elephant).

We notice that the chapter of *al-Humaza* talks about the unseen punishment in the hereafter waiting for the fault-finding backbiters. The unseen matters are actually non-tangible and people accept them as news from Allah<sup>(2)</sup> *the Almighty*. Some people may doubt their occurrence. Thus, the chapter of *al-Fil* here gives us a different example of punishment. It is a factual, real and tangible punishment. Allah *Glorified is He* punishes and takes revenge against His enemies in the worldly life as a hasty punishment that precedes the deferred punishment of the Hereafter. It is as if He *the Almighty* says to us, ‘Consider the tangible, perceivable punishment as a proof of the truthfulness of the unseen punishment I have told you about. The One Who inflicted the army of the elephant with a worldly, tangible punishment is fully Able to punish them with an unseen punishment in the Hereafter’. Thus, the Lord *the Almighty* directs our attention from the unseen punishment mentioned in the chapter of *al-Humaza* to the tangible punishment in the chapter of *al-Fil*, in order for the tangible one to substantiate the truthfulness of the unseen one.

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- (1) The chapter of *Al-Fil*, counting 5 verses and 23 words, is number 105 in the order of the *Mushaf* (the written copy of the Quran). It is chapter number nineteen to be revealed in Mecca, after the chapter of *Al-Kafirun* and before that of *Al-Falaq*.
  - (2) The Islamic concept of ‘Allah’ is not the same as the Christian and Jewish concept of ‘God’. But the word ‘Allah’ does not refer to a tribal god or the God of only Muslims; it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use ‘Allah’ rather than ‘God’ as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.

The tangible punishment also proves that Allah *the Almighty* possesses the universe and holds sway over it. He commands anything to be and it is.

The Lord *Glorified is He* says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفِيلِ ۝  
أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِي تَضْلِيلٍ ۝

**Do you [Prophet] not see how your Lord dealt with the  
army of the elephant? [1] Did He not utterly confound  
their plans? [2] (The Quran, *al-Fil*: 1-2)**

The story of the army of the elephant is a real story that some people of Mecca witnessed with their eyes while others witnessed its traces. In this incident, Allah *the Almighty* caused some events beyond human nature and causal factors to take place. These events were only the outcome of Allah's Omnipotence.

With regards to Allah's saying: 'Do you [O Prophet Muhammad] not see how your Lord dealt with the army of the elephant? (*al-Fil*: 1), the address is directed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is saying to him *peace and blessings be upon him*, 'How can Allah's Threat to punish the disbelievers in the Hereafter be unreal while He inflicted a similar punishment on some people in the worldly life?' This is the harmonious relationship between the chapter of *al-Humaza* and *al-Fil*.

We notice that the chapter in question starts with the word '*alam*' (did you not?). The letters of this Arabic word are the same as the letters '*a*'-'*l*'-'*m*' in the chapter of *al-Baqara*, yet they are pronounced differently. In this chapter, we pronounce this word as '*alam*', but in the chapter of *al-Baqara* we read it as '*alif*'-'*lam*'-'*mim*'. How does the way or recitation differ while the letters are the same? Scholars say that reciting the Quran is different from reading any other book; its reading is divinely-ordained. One should know first how to read it in compliance to this distinctive feature. This is due to the fact that the distinctive features of the Quran are multifaceted.

The first distinctive feature is the way of receiving and learning the recitation of the Quran. One reads any other book in any state one is in, yet he is required to be in a state of ritual purity when learning the Quran. Why is



this?! Because this actually cultivates the manners and trains the soul, a state that man cannot reach except after performing ablution. The second feature is the special way of writing the Quran, as it is not totally consistent with the rules of inscription. For example, we find that the first Arabic word of the expression ‘In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy’ is written as *‘bism’* (In the Name), without the letter *‘alif’*, although the letter *‘alif’* is usually inserted after the letter *‘ba’*. This word is actually written with an *‘alif’* in His saying: ‘Read! In the Name (*bism*) of your Lord Who created’ (*al-‘Alaq*: 1). We may ask why it is omitted in the first case and added in the second. Some scholars say that the Arabs at the time of revelation were not aware of the rules of writing. Consequently, they wrote this word as it was ordained. Moreover, if they wrongly omitted the *‘alif’* in the first case, they will not have added it in the second!

As such, this clearly indicates that the inscription of the Quran is divinely ordained. If it was not divinely ordained and the word *‘bism’* was written wrongly, it will have been written in the same way in all cases. That is, it was written in a different way to indicate that the inscription of the Quran is divinely ordained.

But, who is the one who dictated the Quran in this way? It is well known that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* received the Quran from the Archangel Jibril (Gabriel) and conveyed it to the Companions, saying to them, ‘Write the verses in such-and-such a manner’. We may ask what made the Companions write the word *‘bism’* in different ways. Accordingly, it must be the orders of the one who dictated it, that is Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This fact is also proven by reviewing how the word *‘tabarak’* (blessed) and *‘banat’* (daughters) are written in the Quran. In some cases the *‘alif’* is omitted, and in other cases it is added. If the matter were due to writing these words wrongly, that error will have been repeated in all the cases in the Quran, which is not the case.

With regards to Allah’s saying: ‘Do you [O Prophet Muhammad] not see how your Lord dealt with the army of the elephant?’ (*al-Fil*: 1), the letter *‘hamza’* (do) conveys a question, as when one says, ‘Is Zayd standing?’ or ‘Have you not travelled yet?’, both of which start with a *‘hamza’*. As for the

Arabic word '*lam*' (not), which is a particle of negation, it changes the meaning of a verb written in the present form to be in the past. For example, when one says, 'Mohamed did not write', the word 'write', which is written in the present form in this sentence, denotes the meaning 'wrote' because the particle '*lam*' (did not) preceded it. To conclude, the letter '*hamza*' denotes a question and '*lam*' denotes a negation. The question here is in the negative form. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is asking about a negated matter. This is because when one says, 'Did Mohamed write?' with the verb after the question word, he, in actuality, is asking whether he wrote or not. But if one says, 'Was it Mohamed who wrote?', this is a question about the doer of the action, who could be Mohamed, Ibrahim, etc., and accordingly the subject of the question is mentioned directly after the question word.

As such, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Do you [O Prophet Muhammad] not see...' (*al-Fil*: 1) negates that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw what happened to the army of the elephant. But why is Allah *the Almighty* asking about this negated action?! Supposing that it was not negated, the implied meaning will be that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* saw how his Lord dealt with the army of the elephant. The event in question is seeing what Allah *the Almighty* did to the army of the elephant. But did Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* see that action? No, he did not.

However, is the question here about a negated or affirmed event? Scholars hold the position that the particle indicating a question, '*hamza*', is sometimes used to affirm a meaning. It is known that the speaker's statement could be true or false. Consequently, he engages the addressee in affirming the meaning by using a confirmatory question, saying, for example, 'Did I treat you well?' It is as if the speaker is trying to affirm the fact of treating the addressee well through the latter's confirmation. One does not ask such a question unless he is fully sure the answer will be in his favour. The addressee's confirmation constitutes a stronger proof than the speaker's statement.

As a matter of fact, the question may allude to the correct answer. For example, when we talk to a child, we find him answering according to the last thing he heard because it is that particular part that actually remains in his mind. For example, when one says to him, 'I did not beat you, son, or did I?'

he will say, 'You did'. But if the person said to him, 'Did I or did I not beat you?' he will say, 'You did not'. This illustrates that one can confirm what he wants to say by making the addressee answer the question himself.

When Allah *the Almighty* wants to affirm a fact, He does not use the affirmative form of the question, but rather the negative one. This is due to His *Glorified is He* Absolute Confidence that everyone will answer affirmatively. Here, He says to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Do you [O Prophet Muhammad] not see how your Lord dealt with the army of the elephant?' (*al-Fil*: 1). The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* will naturally say, 'Yes, I did see that'. Yet, if Allah *Glorified is He* had ever used the affirmative form saying, 'Do you [O Prophet Muhammad] see how your Lord dealt with the army of the elephant?' this might indeed have alluded to the answer.

However, the case in this verse is similar to when one says to you, 'You have abandoned me and have never given me anything or treated me well'. You will then reply, 'Have I not given you such-and-such and backed you in such-and-such a time?' As such, you employ a negative question out of confidence that the answer will be in the affirmative. You did not actually allude to the answer you want but to its opposite. This is intentionally meant because it affirms the matter more strongly. It is as if the matter is so obvious that the addressee cannot deny it. Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Do you [O Prophet Muhammad] not see how your Lord dealt with the army of the elephant?' (*al-Fil*: 1)

The letter '*hamza*' could convey the meaning of denial. For example, when a student falsely claims to his father that the teacher beat him, the teacher will say, 'Did I beat you?' using a '*hamza*', as a way of denying the action. Likewise, if we consider the '*hamza*' in the verse as meaning denial, it thus refutes the negation of the action. This consequently constitutes a confirmation of the action. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is saying, 'You have seen how Allah dealt with the army of the elephant'. This eloquent style has been employed many times in the Quran, as in Allah's saying: 'Do you not see that to Allah prostrate all things that are in the heavens and that are in the earth...' (*al-Hajj*: 18).

Scholars say that the expression 'Do you not see?' means 'Do you not know?' We may ask why the former expression was employed instead of the

latter. Offering an answer to this question, they believe that the first means of receiving knowledge are the senses that perceive tangible matters, which are sources of concrete information. The mind then perceives the abstract ones.

Allah *the Almighty* refers to this fact, saying: ‘And Allah has brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers—when you did not know anything—and He gave you hearing and sight and hearts...’ (*an-Nahl*: 78). Allah *the Almighty* shows His Favours on us as He brought us forth from the wombs of our mothers while we did not know anything. The Lord *the Most High* does not say here that He provided us with knowledge but rather He mentions the means of learning. Afterwards, He says: ‘...that you may give thanks’ (*an-Nahl*: 78). This is because having knowledge after being ignorant is a blessing for which we should thank Allah *Glorified is He*. In other words, Allah *the Almighty* taught us through means of knowledge that positively respond to the development of the mind. There are different sources for obtaining knowledge; sometimes it is acquired through heavenly inspiration when acquired through knowing the interpretation of dreams, or deducing information through what we see and hear from others.

The natural order of the senses is as follows: the hearing, the sight and the heart. This is the reasonable order that corresponds to the function of the organs. The first sense to function in the human body is hearing. Then it is followed by sight and reasoning, respectively. Additionally, hearing is the first means of receiving knowledge, as one listens first and then reads.

However, with regards to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Do you [O Prophet Muhammad] not see...’ (*al-Fil*: 1), Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the matter of sight because hearing depends mainly on what other people tell us. As for sight, it is a personal experience and facts gained through sight are more certain than those gained from hearing. The report perceived through hearing could be true or false. By contrast, seeing an incident is a personal experience. That is why it is said, ‘There is no doubt about what the eye sees’. Consequently, His saying: ‘Do you [O Prophet Muhammad] not see...’ (*al-Fil*: 1) means that the knowledge that Allah *the Almighty* conveys to you, O Prophet Muhammad, should be, though it is unseen, regarded as being as certain as what one sees with his eyes. In this regard, one Hadith reads: ‘It is

to worship Allah as if you are seeing Him; and although you do not see Him, He sees you'.<sup>(1)</sup> Likewise, the Lord *the Almighty* says: '...Is it not sufficient as regards your Lord that He is a witness over all things?' (*Fussilat*: 53) To continue, one should totally accept what Allah *the Almighty* tells him as an absolute truth which is comparable to what the person actually sees, and even more truthful. This is because the eye may deceive the person while Allah's News is not deceptive at all.

Furthermore, we should carefully reflect on the precision of using the interrogative particle 'how' in His saying: '...how your Lord dealt with ...' (*al-Fil*: 1). Allah *the Almighty* does not say, '...what your Lord did to the army of the elephant. ...' This indicates that Allah's treatment of those people was not an ordinary one. It is a special action that no one can do except Him *the Almighty*. It is as if He directs our attention to the nature and essence of His Actions. In fact, some actions depend on causal factors that Allah *Glorified is He* created to bring about some effects. These effects are ultimately attributed to Allah because He is the Creator of their causal factors. Some people may wrongly think that the causal factors act by themselves; that is, they say that fire burns and water quenches thirst by themselves.

Moreover, Allah *Glorified is He* may bring about an action without its causal factors, laws or normal ways. Such an action is attributed directly to Him *the Almighty*. This is why His Lofty Names include the First, the Last, the Ascendant (over all creatures) and the Knower of hidden matters. Hence, when one sees a cause leading to an effect, he should recognise that the One Who created that cause is Allah *Glorified is He*. Allah's Power is manifested in both the causal factors that one sees and even those one does not see.

With regards to the army of the elephant, Allah *Glorified is He* could have defeated them and safeguard His Sacred House using the physical power of Quraysh, like any battle between two groups of humans. He needed only to strengthen the people of Quraysh for them to be able to defeat their enemies. However, He *the Almighty* willed to repel the army of the elephant's attack with His Power, not the power of Quraysh. He wanted to repel them with a

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(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 50 and 4777; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 5/9 and 7/10.*

matter beyond human laws and causal factors. Clearly, the amazement is not about the action itself but rather by how it came to pass.

We notice in the verse in question that Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the Attribute of Lordship, saying: ‘...how your Lord...’ (*al-Fil*: 1). This is because Lordship is the Attribute of giving, caring, educating, developing and supporting on the part of the educator until the educated person becomes perfectly developed and has reached a state of readiness. The One Who carried out what happened to the army of the elephant is Prophet Muhammad’s Lord, Who is in charge of all affairs. As Allah *the Almighty* defended His House and repelled its enemy, He is thus fully Able to defend and support Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah *the Almighty* can provide him using causal factors and human laws or using means beyond that. We have to consider what Allah *the Almighty* did to the army of the elephant in the light of His Power and Laws, not in the light of human laws and power. Indeed, every action is measured according to the one who performs it.

Human actions depend on causes and effects, premises and conclusions, and means and ends. By contrast, Allah’s Actions do not depend on these matters. For this reason we should not interpret His Actions in the light of human actions. This is our response to the rationalist school that interprets Allah’s Actions according to human thought and laws. The modern Age of Renaissance witnessed the emergence of Sheikh Jamal Ad-Din Al-Afghany and Mohamed 'Abdo. They noticed that many people denied unseen matters and wanted to subject them to human laws, especially the mathematical minds that only accept conclusive information. They wanted to separate the Messages from the One Who sent them and to measure matters of the unseen according to human laws.

With respect to Allah’s saying: ‘Did He not utterly confound their plans?’ (*al-Humaza*: 2), the negative interrogation here is the strongest way of confirming the truth. The Arabic word ‘*al-kayd*’ (plans) refers to plotting against an enemy to defeat him. It is done by a weak opponent who is unable to confront his enemy and defeat him openly. This means plotting is a sign of weakness and cowardice, not a sign of power or bravery. May Allah be Merciful to Al-'Aqqad who addressed this topic in his response to one of the

feminist writers who advocated women's rights. He said that women have a great power as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Surely, it is a guile of you women; surely your guile is great' (*Yusuf*: 28). By contrast, He *the Almighty* says about Satan: '...surely the strategy of Satan is weak' (*an-Nisa'*: 76).

Al-'Aqqad said that plotting is not a sign of power but rather a sign of weakness because the one who resorts to it is unable to confront his enemy; that is to say that he distrusts his power. Out of his weakness, he never misses an opportunity to destroy his enemy because he cannot guarantee another opportunity to do that. As for the strong person, he may skip a chance of destroying his enemy because he is absolutely sure that he will seize him another time. That is why one of the poets said:

It is weak, but when it has an opportunity,

It kills; this is the nature of the weak

As for Allah's saying: '...confound their plans?' (*al-Fil*: 2), it means that the army of the elephant's plan was thwarted and in vain. This is because their plan was not perceived by the people of Quraysh but by Allah *the Almighty* the Supreme Power that fully knew their plan and plot. With regards to the people of Quraysh, they did not know that plan. By contrast, the army of the elephant's plot was exposed and revealed by Allah *the Almighty*. For this reason, their plan was fruitless, valueless and in vain.

In fact, Allah *the Almighty* does not leave His slaves to face the enemy's plans alone, a fact which is clearly mentioned in His saying: 'Surely they will plot a scheme, and I (too) will plan a scheme' (*at-Tariq*: 15-16). The Lord *the Almighty* will not forsake His slaves; rather, He will confound the plans of their enemies. Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And they planned and Allah (also) planned...' (*Al-'Imran*: 54), and: 'Surely the hypocrites strive to deceive Allah, but it is He Who causes them to be deceived [by their own traps]...' (*an-Nisa'*: 142). The plotters here are deceived by their power and are heedless of the Supreme Power that stands on the side of the ones they plotted against.

The Lord *the Most High* then says:

وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ ﴿٢﴾ تَرْمِيهِمْ بِحِجَارَةٍ مِّن سِجِّيلٍ ﴿٤﴾

**He sent ranks of birds against them [3] pelting them with pellets of hard-baked clay [4] (The Quran, *al-Fil*: 3-4)**

Allah *the Almighty* sent many ranks of birds, one after another, carrying pellets of hard-baked clay with which the army of the elephant was destined to be punished. Sheikh Mohamed 'Abdo interpreted Allah's saying: '...pelting them with pellets of hard-baked clay' (*al-Fil*: 4) to mean that the birds carried microbes on their legs. Yet, we say, 'Do we study the Messages considering them to be the brilliant work of a human?' No, we study them as Messages sent and supported by Allah *the Almighty*. This does not mean that they are beyond human perception for the mind to reject them. However, the mind is not the criterion for accepting them. Suppose that we wanted to take the mind as a criterion, which mind will we choose?! Moreover, if the action is attributed to Allah *the Almighty* why should we intervene in it with our minds?

If we interpret the pellets of hard-baked clay as microbes, then they are like the insect that causes malaria. This is actually a normal action which is different from the Divine Intervention and the incident of destroying the army of the elephant. This form does not befit the momentousness of that incident at all. Such rationalists landed themselves in a problem in their attempt to find a solution to rationalize the unseen matters to the people who do not believe in them.

Likewise, the rationalists landed themselves in a problem when they tried to refute the claims of the Westerners who said that Islam was spread by the sword. Their enthusiasm in responding to the enemies of Islam led to many unnecessary mistakes. What actually disturbed the Western colonizers was the call for Jihad in the Islamic territories. Consequently, they spread the misconception that Islam was spread by the sword. We could have easily responded to them saying, 'Did the early Muslims who presumptively carried the sword to spread Islam embrace it by the sword?'

Nevertheless, we should return to the original state concerning this matter. At the beginning of the Call, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was weak and his followers were a group who were oppressed; so the sword was not used except to repel an attack and to defend the Muslims. However,



the majority of the Muslims misunderstood this truth, thinking that Islam is not concerned with life and its difficulties, and cannot use the sword or power except when it is attacked. This is a wrong perception aiming to plot against Islam to confine it to self-defense; if no one attacked us, we will stand still, not taking one step forward and not beginning a war. In this way, we devoid the religion from the basic mission that Allah *the Almighty* intended, that is, to enjoin good, prohibit evil and fight all kinds of tyranny. Accordingly, in this way Islam lost its positive outlook and contribution to life.

Similarly, in Prophet Muhammad's biography, there are many unseen matters that the abstract human mind has difficulty in accepting. Consequently, some people have denied the authenticity of some incidents, while some others interpreted them rationally to please those who do not believe in the unseen. Some writers claimed that Prophet Muhammad's life was devoid of miracles and even modified Prophet Muhammad's description to reach the conclusion that he *peace and blessings be upon him* was a just a normal human being. In this regard, Mr. Hakal says in his book about Prophet Muhammad's biography, 'I will disregard the miracles that happened to Prophet Muhammad. I will skip these unseen matters and search for his character as a genius'. In their viewpoint, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is just one man among many geniuses. We certainly do not want Muhammad, the genius, but rather Muhammad, the Messenger and the Prophet of Allah. This is sufficient for us. This is because when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is described as a leader and genius, he is considered a normal man with high human abilities. However, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* received special abilities from Allah *Glorified is He*. Such people should not deceive the readers with charming words, for all the descriptions they can attribute to him are lower than that of messengership and prophethood.

Let us review Sheikh Mohamed 'Abdo's interpretation of 'the pellets of hard-baked clay' as microbes with which the ranks of birds pelted the army of the elephant. We say that this incident has been historically documented and all the people agreed that it happened in the Year of the Elephant in which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was born. He was sent as a Messenger forty years later. When the chapter in question was revealed, some

of the people of Mecca who received it from Prophet Muhammad were from fifty to one hundred and twenty years old. This means that the average age of those people when the incident occurred was between eleven to eighty years. All those people heard about the incident or even saw it with their naked eyes. That is why when Allah's saying: 'Do you [O Prophet Muhammad] 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] chewed-up chaff' (*al-Fil*: 1-5) was revealed to Prophet Muhammad, no one among the people of Mecca, who fully knew the meanings and the indications of the Quranic words, belied this incident. This proves that the incident came to pass according to Allah's Description. Thus, the Quranic descriptions of the ranks of birds, the pellets of hard-baked clay, and the chewed-up chaff were all witnessed by the people of Mecca.

Here arises the following question, which is, 'Were the people of Mecca aware of the microbes?!' No, because we discovered the microbes only in the seventeenth century. Also, it is well known that the microbe that afflicts the human has a period of incubation only after which its symptoms appear on the sick person. This period of incubation can take one week or more. Afterwards, the person dies, rots and decays, reaching the level of chewed-up chaff. Clearly, the matter needs a long time, but the Quran employs the particle '*fa*' which denotes that the second action followed soon after the first. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...pelting them with pellets of hard-baked clay: He made them [like] chewed-up chaff' (*al-Fil*: 4-5). Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* employs that particle in His saying: 'Then [later] He causes him to die, then [soon after] (*fa*) [He, Allah] assigns to him a grave' (*Abasa*: 21).

The verses in question mean that as soon as the birds pelted them with the pellets of hard-baked clay, they became like chewed-up chaff. This action is only possible through unseen Power that transcends human ability. Therefore, explaining these verses in question in the light of microbes is untrue and inconsistent with Allah's Book. Moreover, how did the microbe, as they say, choose the army of the elephant but not touch the people of Mecca? It is thus crystal clear that it was not a microbe that afflicted them.

The problem is that such people want to subject the story in question to the human laws and causal factors in order for it not to contain any aspect of the unseen. Why is this? By way of pleasing those who do not believe in the unseen. But what is the benefit of tarnishing the story if the people targeted do not essentially believe in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? Do you think that they will deny his messengership and still believe in the secondary details about his religion?!

As a matter of fact, we do not first consider the details of the religion related to the creed, the obligations, the rulings and legislations and then believe in Muhammad and His Lord after being convinced about these details. Rather, we first believe in Allah *the Almighty* and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and then accept the matters of the creed, the legislations and the rulings. As such, one should not employ his mind in the details of the religion, except to believe in the One and only God Who is not controlled by rules. Furthermore, the only thing in which one should employ his mind in this regard is whether a given message is from Allah *the Almighty* or not. If it was sent down from Allah, we must accept it totally, without any hesitation.

Allah *Glorified is He* gives us examples of that using the elements of the tangible universe. He does not make the mind deduce all the secrets of the universe at once. Rather, He *Glorified is He* bit by bit, shows the human mind the secrets that suit its ability to perceive. In fact, the mind cannot perceive all the realities at once, but rather on a gradual basis. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘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). As the verb in the aforementioned verse is in the future tense, this means that some signs are still hidden. Also, if the mind was able, by itself, to perceive them all at once, it will have perceived them once the mind existed. In addition, all the various phenomena of the universe will have to always be unchanging.

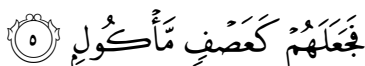
However, Allah’s Wisdom necessitates that some signs be revealed and others concealed for the next generations. Some unseen matters will be tangible tomorrow through the premises and the conclusions that Allah *the Almighty* has placed in the universe. This is the way of deducing unknown matters. The

conclusion which was the result of given premises will be the premises of another conclusion, and so on. Ideas and thought will accordingly develop.

Allah *the Almighty* may reveal one of the secrets of His universe to the slaves even though they do not reach it according to deductive premises; they might find it out accidentally. It has become clear that the secrets of the universe are revealed either through the employment of the mind that reaches the conclusions through their premises or by an accident that Allah *the Almighty* ordains. Such secrets are temporarily unseen because they, when discovered, will become clear to the people.

As for the absolute unseen, no one knows it except Allah *the Almighty* because it does not depend on premises. In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and they cannot comprehend anything of His Knowledge except what He pleases...' (*al-Baqara*: 255). In this verse, comprehension of the unseen is attributed to the people, but it is restricted to Allah's Will. Consequently, this verse refers to the temporarily unseen. As for the absolute unseen, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'The Knower of the unseen! So He does not reveal His secrets to any, except to him whom He chooses as a Messenger...' (*al-Jinn*: 26-27).

Allah *the Almighty* then says:



**He made them [like] cropped stubble [5]  
(The Quran, *al-Fil*: 5)**

The chaff here is what the cattle eat and trample over, or it is the dry, crumbled leaves that fall from a tree. Allah *the Almighty* made the army of the elephant like chewed-up chaff that the cattle eat and discharge as dung. Derivatives of the word '*a'sf*' (chaff) are mentioned in other verses as a description of destructive storms, as in Allah's saying: '...a violent wind (*a'asf*) overtakes them...' (*Yunus*: 22). It is a violent, destructive storm. Thus, Abraha, his soldiers and retainues became like chewed-up chaff, that is, the stiff pieces of straw that the wind scatters.

the chapter of

***Quraysh***



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

**T**he chapter of *Quraysh* <sup>(1)</sup>:

لِإِيلَافِ قُرَيْشٍ ۝١ إِيْلَافِهِمْ رِحْلَةَ الشِّتَاءِ وَالصَّيْفِ ۝٢ فَلْيَعْبُدُوا رَبَّ  
هَذَا الْبَيْتِ ۝٣ الَّذِي أَطْعَمَهُمْ مِنْ جُوعٍ وَآمَنَهُمْ مِنْ خَوْفٍ ۝٤

**[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]  
(The Quran, *Quraysh*: 1-4)**

Undoubtedly, there is a clear harmonious relationship between the chapter of *al-Fil* and the chapter of *Quraysh*. Allah (God) <sup>(2)</sup> the *Almighty* destroyed the army of the elephant to: ‘...make the Quraysh feel secure’ (*Quraysh*: 1). This means that the army was destroyed in order for the people of Quraysh to feel secure during the winter journey to Ash-Sham and the summer journey to

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(1) The chapter of *Quraysh*, counting 4 verses and 17 words, is number 106 in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *At-Tin* and before that of *Al-Qari’a*. ‘Ubayy ibn Ka’b considered it along with the chapter of *Al-Fil* as one chapter and that is why he *Allah be pleased with him* did not separate them by saying *Al-Basmala* (in the Name of Allah).

(2) The Islamic concept of ‘Allah’ is not the same as the Christian and Jewish concept of ‘God’. But the word ‘Allah’ does not refer to a tribal god or the God of only Muslims; it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use ‘Allah’ rather than ‘God’ as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.

Yemen. It is not necessary that two chapters should be revealed consecutively to be harmoniously related, for one of them may be sent down a long time after the other. However, the order of the *Mushaf* (the written copy of the Quran) placed it in this position in the final order that Allah *the Almighty* prescribed. There is a difference between the final order of the Quran and the order of revelation. This is because the descending of revelation was connected to the factual realities and the incidents of the Call. However, the Quran written in the Preserved Tablet has another order. This means the verses have an order of revelation and another one for the written text, which is arranged according to the Preserved Tablet.

We have given an example for this, saying: when someone wants to design a villa, he imagines the position of the rooms and the furniture. He designs the building in his mind and then in reality. However, the required pieces of furniture are brought in a different order. He may buy a living room and then a dining room, etc. Likewise, the Quran we have is the final order which fully corresponds to the Preserved Tablet.

With regards to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '[He did this] to make the Quraysh feel secure' (*Quraysh*: 1), the particle '*lam*' (to) signifies that what precedes this is the cause of what follows it. Allah *the Almighty* destroyed Abraha and his soldiers to preserve the high rank and awe-inspiring position of the people of Quraysh among the Arabs in the Arabian Peninsula, which also guaranteed the stability of their trade to As-Sham in the winter and to Yemen in the summer. The position of Quraysh will have been lost if Abraha had been left to destroy the *Ka'ba*. After all, the reason of the people of Mecca's position and high rank among the Arabs was the existence of the Sacred House to which the people from all the corners of the peninsula come to perform pilgrimage. Under the care and the service of Quraysh, the tribes used to gather at the Sacred House.

When the people of Quraysh used to travel in their commercial journeys, they were under the protection and care of these tribes and their caravans were safeguarded from theft and robbery. The existence of Quraysh near the Sacred House gave them a high position among the Arabs. The tribe of Quraysh used to live in Mecca, which was a valley bereft of plants, provision



and livelihood except through trade. Thus, the two chapters are closely connected: 'He [Allah] made them [like] chewed-up chaff' (*al-Fil*: 5), and: '[Allah did this] to make the Quraysh feel secure' (*Quraysh*: 1).

However, Allah's saying: 'So let them worship the Lord of this House: who provides them with food to ward off hunger, and security to ward off fear' (*Quraysh*: 3-4) indicates that the destruction of Abraha and his army was basically meant to protect Allah's Sacred House which lead to Quraysh's security during the winter and summer journeys. Consequently, they were provided with sustenance that warded off hunger and with security that dispelled fear.

This means the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'So let them worship the Lord of this House' (*Quraysh*: 3) indicates that they owe Allah *Glorified is He* and His House a favour, which is why they should return it by worshipping Him, the Lord of the House, the main establisher of their safety and happiness. This means that Allah's saying: '[He did this] to make the Quraysh feel secure' (*Quraysh*: 1) is both related to the story of the army of the elephant and Allah's saying: 'So let them worship the Lord of this House' (*Quraysh*: 3).

If we carefully reflect on Allah's saying: '...Who provides them with food to ward off hunger, and security to ward off fear' (*Quraysh*: 4), we find it revolves around the necessary elements of life. Man cannot live without food that satisfies his hunger, as it is one of the basics of life. Security and the absence of fear are not less important than food. Fear stems from anxiety that a blessing may be removed, or a calamity may befall the person. Clearly, one of the greatest blessings for man is that Allah *the Almighty* guarantees that He provides him with food to ward off hunger and safety to dispel fear. This is corroborated by Prophet Muhammad's saying: 'Whosoever begins the day feeling secure in his family, with good health and possessing provision for his day is as though he possessed the whole world'.<sup>(1)</sup>

If we review the history of Mecca since its very beginning, we find that this blessing is the answer to the supplication of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham)

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of 'Ubayd ibn Mihsin Al-Ansari Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Al-Adab Al-Mufrad, Hadith no. 300.*

*peace be upon him* when he invoked Allah, saying: ‘And when Ibrahim (Abraham) said, “My Lord, make it a secure town and provide its people with fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the last day...”’ (*al-Baqara*: 126).

Naturally, the outcome of providing Quraysh with food to ward off hunger and safety to ward off fear, and to ensure security during the winter and summer journeys should consequently be to worship Allah *the Almighty* a fact which is clear in His saying in the chapter in question: ‘So let them worship the Lord of this House’ (*Quraysh*: 3). This is because worship is the original mission for which they lived in that barren valley which was bereft of plants. That is why one of Ibrahim’s invocations was: ‘O our Lord! Surely, I have settled some of my offspring in a valley without any cultivation, near Your Sacred House that they may, O our Lord, establish the prayer; therefore, make the hearts of some people yearn towards them...’ (*Ibrahim*: 37). Prophet Ibrahim *peace be upon him* did not settle a part of his offspring near the Sacred House except for the people to establish prayer therein.

With regards to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘So let them worship...’ (*Quraysh*: 3), we find that the word ‘worship’ can carry various meanings according to the various contexts in which it is used. It means to know Allah *the Almighty* and therefore to obey and submit to Him. One should recognize Him as the only God, the Omnipotent, the Wise, the provider and the Everlasting One. We actually should submit to the One Who has such Attributes. The one who interprets worship as knowing Allah *the Almighty* depends on the fact that knowledge is the way that leads to the objective, which is to obey Allah *Glorified is He*. Some other scholars hold that worship is submission, for knowledge without submission to Allah is meaningless. In actuality, obedience and following the Way of Guidance come after submission, for some people may submit but not follow the Way of Guidance.

That is why the scholars interpret Allah’s saying: ‘And I have not created jinn and men except that they should serve Me’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 56) as follows: Allah *Glorified is He* created them to know Him *the Almighty*. But were people created to only serve this purpose?! If this was the case, seeking knowledge may defer people’s application of Allah’s Commands. That is why we believe that ‘to worship’ means to submit and follow the Way of

Guidance, especially because the people addressed here did not submit or follow the Divine Way of Guidance.

When we discuss a verse, we should search for those verses that are associated with it in the rest of the Quran. If we ask whether Allah's saying: 'And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should serve Me' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 56) is unique in the Quran, we will find the answer is no, because Allah *the Almighty* says elsewhere: '...though all they are ordered to do is worship Allah alone, sincerely devoting their religion to Him...' (*al-Bayyina*: 5). From this we see that 'worship' means to submit and obey. Obedience is only possible when a Messenger is sent with a Way of Guidance that he should explain, call the people to follow and apply before them. If this was not the case and worship was possible straight after the creation, there will have been no need for Messengers. To conclude, His saying: 'And I have not created jinn and men except that they should serve Me' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 56) refers to worship by carrying out religious obligations conveyed by a Messenger. Afterwards, some people will obey while others disobey.

If we reflect on the meaning of worship in His saying: 'So let them worship the Lord of this House' (*Quraysh*: 3), we find that Allah *Glorified is He* connects 'worship' to the reason why Prophet Ibrahim came with his offspring to Mecca. This is because the original reason was '...that they may establish the prayer ...' (*Ibrahim*: 37). It is as if prayer is the center of worship. Nevertheless, we should take into account that worship has a broad, middle and a narrow meaning. The narrow one is knowledge while the middle is carrying out the prescribed rites and acts of worship by which we become closer to Allah *the Almighty* like prayer, fasting, giving obligatory alms and pilgrimage. Scholars refer to the rest of the way of life as 'the transactions', which are also part of the Divine Way of Guidance. As a matter of fact, if we follow that Way in all our transactions, we will consequently fulfil the broad, comprehensive meaning of worship.

Yet, we stress here that this division is only a form of classification, for Islam never differentiates between the acts of worship and the transactions except with regards to the one to whom these actions are directed. As for the acts of worship, they constitute a relationship between the slave and his Lord,

while the transactions constitute a relationship between a human being and his fellow human being. In fact, the laws laid down by Allah *the Almighty* along with the rulings that govern the activities of the Muslim society with regards to the family, politics, governorship, ethics, economy, etc. all come from the same source.

To continue, if we say that prayer is what is intended by 'worship' in His saying: 'So let them worship the Lord of this House' (*Quraysh*: 3), this is possible because it has aspects related and connected to all acts of worship and transactions. Prayer is indeed worship in the general and comprehensive sense of the word, that is, submission to Allah, following His Way of Guidance and shunning any man-made ways. With regards to the various acts of worship, they are explicitly defined in His Way of Guidance, and thus no one can add anything to or even omit anything from them.

As for transactions, Allah *the Almighty* allowed the human mind to have a role therein and to set the laws that suit the environment and the age in the light of the general principles that do not violate the spirit and the objectives of the Divine Way of Guidance. In this connection, the disbelievers before Islam had their own laws and systems that governed their transactions, family life, trade and economy. This is because these systems are necessary for life. By contrast, no one dares to change the ruling of the acts of worship. For example, no one said to another, 'Pray to Me', and no one sought to have a close relationship with someone else by offering prayer or fast to him. This is because worship is only defined and ordained by virtue of Allah's Way of Guidance.

Prayer has a primary role in Islam, as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Prayer constitutes the pillar of the religion'. This is because it gathers both the acts of worship and transactions. How is this possible?! Scholars say that the prescribed rulings of transactions have a relationship with one's surrounding society on one hand, and also the broader one, this is, all the Muslims in general, on the other. These transactions have to be conducted under the leadership of someone who rules the people, guides them, implements Allah's Rulings and Prescribed Punishments, repels the wrongdoings to help the wronged and returns the rights to their owners. Likewise, prayer teaches us to have a leader to follow, and it thus has an aspect of governorship.

Additionally, prayer is distinguished from the rest of the acts of worship by the fact that it was prescribed on Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* directly from Allah *the Almighty*. As for the rest of the acts of worship, they were prescribed through the one trusted with the revelation, that is, the Archangel Jibril (Gabriel), who acted as an intermediary between Allah and Prophet Muhammad. This actually indicates the importance and the high rank of prayer in the religion of Islam. With regards to the place of its prescription, it was given to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the Presence of His Lord, a place where no one else can reach. The Muslims have been granted this rank of closeness to Allah *the Almighty* when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed Allah's Salutation to his followers. Accordingly, they, that is the Muslims, attained the rank of closeness with which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was honoured. For this reason, his Lord said to him: '... [O Prophet Muhammad] bow down in worship and draw close' (*al-'Alaq*: 19); just as he *peace and blessings be upon him* drew close to his Lord during the Night Journey and Ascension, we can also draw close to Him *Glorified is He* and be in His presence through prayer.

We have previously clarified that prayer includes all the Pillars of Islam. As for the two Testimonies of Islam, they are obligatory one time at least in the Muslim's lifetime. During prayer, one pronounces these testimonies many times. Likewise, there is an aspect of *zakat* (Almsgiving) in the prayer. Having wealth to pay the *zakat* depends on working which, in turn, depends on time. Prayer takes some of one's time. This means, when a person sacrifices part of his time to offer prayer, it is as if he pays *zakat*.

Furthermore, there is an aspect of fasting in the prayer, as one abstains from all that breaks the Fast and even from some actions which are lawful during fasting. Moreover, there is an aspect of pilgrimage during prayer, as the one who offers it stands in the direction of Allah's Sacred House and recalls it to mind as if it is before him. These are the aspects that Prayer shares with the rest of the acts of worship.

But how does prayer share some aspects of transactions? Scholars say that when the Mue'dhdhin calls for prayer, we see the people of faith who respect Allah's Obligations leave the mundane affairs and eagerly go to offer prayer

and answer Allah's Call. The president and the subjects, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak are all equal in answering Allah's Call and in standing before Him *the Almighty* in one row. One stands in any space which is empty; we see the minister, his doorman and chauffeur all stand side-by-side in one row. The doorman may go to the mosque before the minister and sit in a better place. This eliminates the self-conceitedness, arrogance and division into castes. All are equal with regards to worshipping Allah *the Almighty*. This bridges the gaps between the castes and raises the position of the poor and the weak. This encourages other members of the society to provide them with a respectable life that Allah *the Almighty* wishes for them. When the principle of equality prevails in the society, the people will be reassured about their wealth and the honour of their family. This consequently results in maintaining harmony between the different members of the society and also leads to welfare, prosperity, safety and security.

Besides, prayer teaches us how to choose the Imam and those who represent us and speak on our behalf. It teaches us the conditions of governorship, not everyone is allowed to be the Imam of the prayer. The worshippers should accept and be pleased with the Imam whom they follow. This is why it is narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Allah curses the one who leads a people while they dislike him'.<sup>(1)</sup> Moreover, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* has set for us the standards for choosing the Imam of the prayer to be as follows: the first choice is the one who has memorized the Book of Allah, but if two people are equal in this aspect, then the one who is more knowledgeable about the Prophet Muhammad's *Sunnah* should be chosen and given precedence.<sup>(2)</sup>

When the Imam stands before the people, he should look at them and say, 'Keep your rows straight (during prayer in congregation), for keeping the rows straight is part of the perfection of the prayer'.<sup>(3)</sup> After this, the people

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(1) *A Hadith to that effect was narrated on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 6707.*

(2) *See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 20685; Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 585; and An-Nasa'i, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra, Hadith no. 866.*

(3) *This Hadith was narrated on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 723; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 124/433.*

should not say, '*Allahu Akbar*' (Allah is the Greatest) until the Imam himself says it. Likewise, they should not bow until he bows, and when he recites the Quran, they should listen to it attentively. This is a matter of willful obedience and compliance to the Imam because the people are the ones who choose him and accepted his leadership of the prayer.

Moreover, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Let those be nearest to me who are mature and endowed with understanding (of the religion)'.<sup>(1)</sup> This actually refers to those people who should stand behind the Imam in the first row. In reality, this is not an honour for those people, but this is justifiable because of the Imam's need for them as he is prone to error and forgetfulness, which is why those who can help him and correct his mistakes should stand behind him in the first row. Besides, if the Imam has to leave the prayer for a certain excuse, he will be able to find someone to end the prayer as an Imam. Thus, the people who are mature and endowed with an understanding of the religion have a function in the prayer.

An incident in this regard happened when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prayed two units of prayer instead of four. One of the Companions asked him, 'O Messenger of Allah, has the prayer been shortened or did you forget?' He asked, 'Is what Dhu Al-Yadain says true?' They said, 'Yes'. Consequently he *peace and blessings be upon him* went forward and performed two other units of prayer and said the *Salam*, then he prostrated twice thereby carrying out the prostrations of forgetfulness'.<sup>(2)</sup> This clearly shows the high rank which has been given to *Imama* (leadership in the prayer), and the obligation of following the Imam and to comply with him, except in the case of necessity in order to preserve the prayer. The people who are endowed with an understanding of the religion have no role to perform except when the Imam makes a mistake in prayer. In such a case, they should not follow him and should notify and correct him.

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(1) *This Hadith was narrated on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud Allah be pleased with him. See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 4373; Ad-Darimi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1303; and At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 228.*

(2) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 7250; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 79/573, and Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 16708.*

If we review the verses on obedience in the Book of Allah, we find that the Lord *the Almighty* says: '...obey Allah and obey the Messenger...' (*an-Nisa'*: 59), and: 'Obey Allah and the Messenger...' (*Al-'Imran*: 32), as well as: 'Obey the Messenger...' (*at-Taghabun*: 12), and: '...obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you....' (*an-Nisa'*: 59). In this regard, we should notice that the imperative order 'obey' is not repeated in the last verse for the people in authority. That is to say that Allah *the Almighty* does not say, 'and obey those in authority among you'. This means that the people in authority and the rulers are not obeyed for their positions; rather, obeying them stems mainly from our obedience to Allah *Glorified is He* and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. If they disobey Allah and His Messenger, the people are not required to obey them.

In this way, prayer gives us general principles related to the matter of governorship and the public authority in the Muslim society, which are ways of reforming the affairs of the people and the country. If the ruler is good, the subjects will also be good. The Imam should not be blindly obeyed in everything but rather obeyed within the limits of the religious laws and the Islamic system.

We should take into account that the role of mature people who are endowed with an understanding of the religion is not restricted to prayer. The ruler who is in charge of the affairs of the Muslims should select his retainers, assistants and ministers from among the mature people who are endowed with an understanding of the religion. They should be people who are pious and well-versed in religious knowledge and jurisprudence. Furthermore, they should be well aware of the condition of the people and the relations of the nation with other countries, because they will be the counselors of the ruler. They should prioritize Allah's Pleasure over that of the ruler. This is a difficult matter that needs power, a strong personality, firm belief and no fear of blame from anyone.

In this regard, one of the righteous people said, 'Devote your observation to the One Who is Ever-Watchful over you; devote you thanks to the One Whose Blessings ceaselessly come to you; devote your worship to the One you cannot dispense with; and devote your submission to the One against His Kingdom and Sovereignty you cannot rebel'.



It has become clear that prayer in this sense includes all the religious obligations, acts of worships and transactions. That is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘The precepts of Islam will be abandoned one by one. The first will be the governorship and the last will be the prayer’.<sup>(1)</sup> This means that the first aspect of Allah’s Way of Guidance that will be violated is governorship, in particularly when the rulers govern by other than what Allah *the Almighty* has revealed. And the last precept of Islam to be abandoned will be the prayer.

If we carefully reflect on the prayer, we will find it to be one of the necessary elements in the Muslim society. This is because life is full of various incidents, problems and concerns. The people differ as to how they solve these problems and overcome these concerns. Prayer is the best treatment in these cases. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gives us an example in this regard. When a matter distressed him, he used to offer prayer.<sup>(2)</sup> Whenever the causal factors and the events closed in on him, the first thing to think about was praying to his Lord, Whose Control nothing on the earth or in the heaven can escape. This indicates that prayer is a refuge from all calamities and concerns. There is a difference between the one who invokes, calls, and seeks refuge in his Lord and Creator and the one who drinks alcohol to forget about his concerns. Afterwards, the concerns will remain and will be compounded with the consequences of that major sin and disobedience to Allah *Glorified is He*.

Allah *the Almighty* endowed us with minds in order to face and find solutions for the momentous events and difficult problems—not to escape them by intoxicating the mind. In fact, when a concern lingers, its difficulty increases, just like yeast. The unsolved problem escalates and becomes complicated. Surprisingly, while the person suffering a problem needs intellectual abilities beyond his own abilities to solve the problem, he intoxicates his mind, wrongly thinking that this will end the problem. If he remembered that he has a Lord Who is in charge of

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Umama Al-Bahili Allah be pleased with him. See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 22160; and Al-Hakim, Al-Mustadrak, Hadith no. 7022.*

(2) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Hudhayfa Allah be pleased with him. See Ahmad, Musnad, 5/288; and Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1319.*

him and takes care of him, he will seek refuge in Him. After all, Allah *the Almighty* is the Creator of the human beings and will not abandon them. Imagine a machine checked five times a day by its maker; will it suffer any malfunction, damage or defect?!

That is why when the concerned person offers prayer and seeks refuge in His Lord, he ends the prayer feeling calm and serene. What has happened to him? No one knows the details but undoubtedly it is not a physical surgery but rather a psychological healing carried out by the Creator Who knows how to treat the beings He created. He *the Almighty* cures him in an unknown way and provides him with the required elements to solve his problems. Furthermore, the Lord *the Almighty* makes him content and reassured when dealing with the events. Contentment and reassurance reform one's thoughts and allow him to find a way out of his straitened situation relying on causal factors. If his problem is beyond these causal factors, it will be solved by a means other than them. As Allah *the Almighty* is unseen, the way He cures is also unseen and we should not hope to know how it works in reality.

There is another privilege of prayer which is not shared by any other act of worship. Allah *the Almighty* gives the keys to this act of worship to the slave. When he wants to meet with his Lord, he can freely choose the time, the place, the subject of meeting and the time it ends. One should only make ablution, direct himself to the *Qibla* (the *Ka'ba* in Mecca) and make *Takbir* (by saying, 'Allah is the Greatest'). Undoubtedly, there is a great difference between this meeting and our meetings with an official, president or ruler. How did the slave obtain this high rank? How did he earn the authority to control the elements of the meeting in the aforementioned way?! It is due to his slavery to Allah *the Almighty* directing his worship towards the Lord out of faith in and submission to Him *Glorified is He*. The Lord *the Almighty* granted His slave this mastery; man started as a slave and ended up as a master. The poet speaks the truth when he expressed this meaning, saying,

It is a sufficient honour for me to be a slave  
Without any appointment, my Lord welcomes me  
He is in His Supreme Position,  
but I meet Him whenever and wherever I wish

How great the Lord Who grants this mastery to His slave is! To be sure that the slave has all the keys to prayer, you should read the following Sacred Hadith in which Prophet Muhammad related that Allah says, ‘I am just as My slave thinks I am (that is, I am able to do for him what he thinks I can do for him) and I am with him if He remembers Me. If he remembers Me in himself, I, too, remember him in Myself; and if he remembers Me in a group of people, I remember him in a group that is better than them; and if he comes one span nearer to Me, I go one cubit nearer to him; and if he comes one cubit nearer to Me, I go a distance of two outstretched arms nearer to him; and if he comes to Me walking, I go to him running’.<sup>(1)</sup>

Surprisingly, some people do not deal with Allah *Glorified is He* seriously in the way they handle the simplest things in their lives and even their games. For example, we find that the time of the football match is set many weeks prior to its occurrence. All the people organize their times and prepare themselves to attend that match. Some people may even cancel some meetings and skip some responsibilities to spare time for the match. We are right to ask here, ‘Why do we not do this with regards to prayer? Why do we not organize our time to be able to offer the prayers in their due times?!’

In a football match, we find the referee holding his whistle and subjecting all the players to his orders. Even if he makes a wrong decision, no one can object to him. How did we change a serious matter into a game and a game into a serious matter? How did we take heed of the rules of football and forget Allah’s Way of Guidance? We invoke Allah for Pardon, to keep us in a good state and to return us to His Religion in a good way. Indeed, He is fully Able to do that and is in charge of it.

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 7405; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2/2675.*



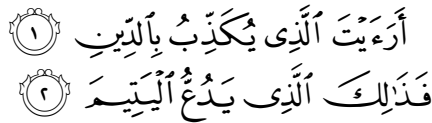
the chapter of

***al-Ma'un***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Ma'un*<sup>(1)</sup>:



**[Prophet], have you considered the person who  
denies the Judgment? [1] It is he who pushes  
aside the orphan [2] (The Quran, *al-Ma'un*: 1-2)**

The expression ‘have you considered’ could be taken literally, that is, ‘Have you [Prophet Muhammad] seen the one who denies the Judgment?’ The cause of revelation of these verses has to do with a specific incident when Abu Lahab struck an orphan and broke his hand. Other scholars believe that they might have been revealed in reference to Al-‘As ibn Wa’il or another disbeliever. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* could have seen this incident.<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) The chapter of *al-Ma'un* counting 7 verses and 25 words is number 107 in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *At-Takathur* and before that of *Al-Kafirun* in reference to Al-‘As ibn Wa’il. See As-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan Fi ‘Ulum Al-Quran*, 1/196.

(2) With regards to the cause of revelation of this chapter, Muqatil and Al-Kalbi hold that it was revealed in reference to Al-‘As ibn Wa’il Ash-Sahmi. Ibn Juraij narrated that Abu Sufyan ibn Harb used to slaughter two camels every week. When an orphan came to him asking for something, he hit him with a stick. Thereupon, Allah *the Almighty* revealed His saying: ‘Have you [O Prophet Muhammad] considered the person who denies the Judgment? It is he who pushes aside the orphan’ (*al-Ma'un*: 1-2). See Al-Wahidi, *Asbab An-Nuzul*, 1/645.

The Arabic letter '*hamza*' (have) in the Lord's saying: 'Have you [O Prophet Muhammad] considered...' (*al-Ma'un*: 1) is a particle of interrogation. One of the Quranic manners of expression is to mention a statement in the form of a question. This is because Allah (God)<sup>(1)</sup> *the Almighty* wants the addressee to engage in the talk. This style is common in teaching. Instead of giving the lesson in the form of statements, the teacher gives it in the form of questions posed to the students to attract their attention. This makes them partake in deducing the information. His saying: 'Have you [O Prophet Muhammad] considered...' (*al-Ma'un*: 1) could mean, 'Have you any idea?' or 'Tell me', as when one says, 'Have you any idea what happened to so-and-so?' This is actually meant in order for the listener to tell the speaker about what happened.

However, Allah *the Almighty* then offers the answer to the question, saying: 'It is he who pushes aside the orphan' (*al-Ma'un*: 2). It is as if the answer cannot be provided by human beings, and consequently He *Glorified is He* should tell us about it. This is because when we listen to the question: 'Have you considered [O Prophet Muhammad] the person who denies the Judgment?' (*al-Ma'un*: 1-2), we might understand that the one who denies the Judgment is he who does not believe in what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has come with. However, Allah *the Almighty* wants to tell us about something we may not be aware of: denying the Day of Judgment does not necessarily mean disbelieving in the Islamic Call altogether. The denier could be a believer in the Call but does not follow its Way of Guidance by obeying the commands and abstaining from the prohibitions. It is as though such a person believes with his tongue but not with his heart, or his heart is not connected to his limbs as he does not practically apply his Belief. In fact, the practical application of Belief is the criterion for true Belief because it is easy to believe but difficult to apply that Belief practically in real life.

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(1) The Islamic concept of 'Allah' is not the same as the Christian and Jewish concept of 'God'. But the word 'Allah' does not refer to a tribal god or the God of only Muslims; it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use 'Allah' rather than 'God' as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.



In our lives, we believe in many issues but our actions prove that we are not certain about them, as in the case of death. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'There is no certainty that is mixed with doubt more than death'. Indeed, there is no doubt about death; however, man lives his life as if he will never die. Heedlessness overwhelms him until he totally forgets about complying with Allah's Way of Guidance and applying it.

Allah *Glorified is He* says here: 'Have you [O Prophet Muhammad] considered the person who denies the Judgment? It is he who pushes aside the orphan' (*al-Ma'un*: 1-2). Allah *the Almighty* answers the question Himself, affirming that even though such a person believes in the Islamic Call, his behaviour clearly indicates his weak Belief and doubt. This is the result of being heedless about the Way of Guidance due to being forgetful of the reward. If he recalled the pleasure and the reward of the good deeds, he will not fall short in doing them. Likewise, if he recalled the punishment for disobedience, he will not dare to commit any bad deed.

In this connection, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked Haritha: 'Haritha how is the state of your faith?' He said, 'I have become a true believer in Allah'. He described his faith as being true, which is a great matter. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* thus wanted to direct his attention to the seriousness of this answer and to the fact that the words should not be uttered without proof, saying, 'Every true matter has a proof. So, what is the proof of your true faith?' Haritha said, 'I have become indifferent to the worldly life, and its precious and trivial objects are the same for me. It is as if I am looking to the people of paradise enjoying its pleasures, and the people of hell being punished therein'. Thus, the unseen matters are no longer mere reports but rather a factual reality that this Companion actually experiences. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, 'You have known the way, so adhere firmly to it'.<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Al-Harith ibn Malik Al-Ansari Allah be pleased him. See Ibn Abu Shayba, Musannaf, Hadith no. 30425; U'bd ibn Humayd, Musnad, Hadith no. 444 and 445; At-Tabarani, Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir, Hadith no. 3367; and Al-Bayhaqi, Shu'ab Al-Iman, Hadith no. 10107.*

Thus, the one who denies the Day of Judgment in this chapter is a believer who has faith in only the essence of the religion but does not implement it in practice. One of the descriptions of such a person is that he: '...pushes aside the orphan' (*al-Ma'un*: 2). The word '*yadu*' (pushes aside) indicates the severity and heinousness of his action. It means to push someone aside powerfully and violently. He did not repel the orphan verbally, but he repelled him by perpetuating a humiliating and painful action, though the orphan is weak and helpless. Generally, weakness is the result of the absence of the power to undertake an action or the inability to make use of energy. For example, the old person does not have the power to undertake some actions but he has a thinking mind that he can use to fulfil his purposes. As for the orphan, he possesses neither; he lacks the power and enough mental ability as he is still young. This is because he is not a mature person. That is why the scholars defined the orphan as the one whose father dies, while he has not yet reached puberty. This description is no longer applicable to him once he attains puberty.

For this reason, the matter of pushing the orphan aside is heinous and cruel, given that he is in a dire need for someone to embrace him, treat him kindly and take care of him. Furthermore, the orphan was brought into existence as one of Allah's created beings. As a result, Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who provides him with sustenance and care during this state, be he a believer or a disbeliever. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* provides all the people with the physical means of sustenance and guarantees them for everybody.

As such, when someone takes care of a weak orphan, he thus fulfils the mission that Allah *the Almighty* wanted for him. It is true that Allah *the Almighty* is Fully Able to make the orphan self-sufficient and to provide him with a better sustenance. However, He *the Almighty* wants to see how the people show kindness to and cooperate with each other. The Lord *Glorified is He* tests some people by means of others because He *Glorified is He* wants to see the strong slaves treat the weak kindly. That is why He calls spending in His Way a '*qard*' (gift), saying: 'Who is it that will offer to Allah a goodly gift (*qard*) so He will multiply it for him many times...' (*al-Baqara*: 245).

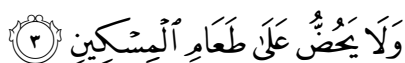
When one gives the poor and the orphans, he offers Allah a gift, as He *the Almighty* is the One Who is in charge of providing the slaves, not you. But

when the members of the society treat the orphans harshly and do not provide them with sustenance, Allah's hidden Ways of provision come into existence, providing the orphans with their needs from an unexpected source, Out of His Benevolence, Allah *Glorified is He* made our care for the orphans a means of ensuring the safety of our children after our demise. In the early age of one's lifetime, the person is preoccupied with himself—it is the most precious thing he has. If Allah *the Almighty* grants him offspring, his care will be then concentrated on them. He becomes anxious about their future and therefore collects wealth to guarantee it.

In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* shows us Divine Justice, saying, 'If one takes care of an orphan, a weak or a needy one, I will help his children after his death and will make someone take care of them'. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And let those [disposing of the estate] have the same fear they will have if they left behind them weakly offspring; let them be careful of (their duty to) Allah, and let them speak appropriate words' (*an-Nisa'*: 9). Thus, if one wants to be assured about the life of his children after his demise, this does not depend on a house to build, or a big amount of money to put in the bank, or to insure their life in such-and-such a company. Rather, one must depend on the Divine Insurance with Allah *the Almighty* Who is the Best Protector, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: '...but Allah is the Best of protectors, and He is the Most Merciful of the merciful' (*Yusuf*: 64).

In the same connection, Allah *the Almighty* shows us a real incident of this Divine Insurance for the children. In the chapter of *al-Kahf*, He *the Almighty* says in the story of Prophet Musa (Moses) with the righteous man: 'And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure belonging to them, and their father was a righteous man; so your Lord desired that they should attain their maturity and take out their treasure—a mercy from your Lord...' (*al-Kahf*: 82). Allah *the Almighty* provided the two orphans the means to preserve their treasure due to their father's righteousness. In other words, the righteousness of the father helped his children because the Lord *the Most High* took care of his young children and prepared the causal factors that preserved their treasure through an unexpected source.

Some people may wrongly think that the matter of pushing the orphan aside is normal and not harmful. However, Allah *the Almighty* directs our attention to the seriousness and the grievousness of this action. This is because the most important thing in the life of man is to preserve his life through food and drink. The first aspect of honouring the orphan is to provide him with the basic elements of life until he reaches puberty. As for the one who pushes the orphan aside, he is a stingy person and devoid of goodness. In this connection, a proverb reads, 'So-and-so has been lost like an orphan sitting at a stingy people's dining table'. After this, the chapter directs our attention to another manifestation of transgression against the rights of the orphans and the needy. Allah *the Almighty* says:



**And does not urge others to feed the needy [3]  
(The Quran, *al-Ma'un*: 3)**

Another quality of the one who denies the Day of Judgment is that he does not urge others to feed the needy. In the first incident, he pushes the orphan aside; that is to say that he does not just rebuke him when he rejects to give him what he wants. However, he transgresses against him physically, indicating that he hates the orphans and dislikes giving them anything. If one cannot give an orphan or the needy what they need, he should at least urge other people to give to them. One should at least guide them to some people who can give them. Being unable to give does not exempt you from the responsibility. If one cannot give to them, he should convince the rich people to do that.

The Quran offers an example of that in the matter of striving in the cause of Allah, which says: 'It shall be no crime for the weak, nor for the sick, nor for those who do not find what they should spend (to stay behind), so long as they are sincere to Allah and His Messenger; there is no way (of blame) against the doers of good...' (*at-Tawba*: 91). The one who cannot participate in fighting in the Way of Allah should strive with his tongue to urge the capable people to participate in fighting. The matter does not actually end at this point, for Allah *the Almighty* then refers to the emotional effort, saying: 'Nor [is there blame] on those who came to you that you might carry them,

when you said, "I cannot find that on which to carry you"; they went back while their eyes overflowed with tears on account of grief because they did not find anything they could spend' (*at-Tawba*: 92). Thus, there are three stages in striving in the Way of Allah: to do that by oneself, one's tongue or one's emotions.

After the Quran tells us about the economic and social acts of worship, it directs our attention to a ritual act of worship, which is prayer.

Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ ﴿٤﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ ﴿٥﴾  
الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ ﴿٦﴾ وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ ﴿٧﴾

**So woe to those who pray [4] but are heedless of their  
prayer [5] those who are all show [6] and forbid common  
kindnesses[7] (The Quran, *al-Ma'un*: 4 - 7)**

The word 'woe' here is a threat directed to some of those who actually engage in offering prayer and who are the minority of people who believe in Allah and His Messenger Muhammad and perform acts of worship and other rituals. However, their prayer is defective, as it is not offered in the perfect way required by Allah *the Almighty*. That is why the scholars differentiate between the one who offers the prayer perfectly in compliance with Allah's Command and the one who performs it outwardly, just imitating its movements. Truly, the difference between the two is like the difference between the form and the content.

Prayer has outer movements and an inward content in the hearts. This matter is explained in a prophetic Hadith when someone prayed outwardly in front of Prophet Muhammad by imitating the movement of Prayer. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, 'Go and offer prayer, for you have not offered it'. He repeated it three times. Why is this? Because when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw the movements of that man, he recognized that he was not offering prayer in the required way. This clearly indicates that he lacked the state of closeness to Allah and the required humbleness in the Lord's Presence. After the third time, the man

said to Prophet Muhammad, 'By Allah, I cannot do any better than that; O Messenger of Allah, teach me'.<sup>(1)</sup>

In the chapter in question, Allah *the Almighty* threatens those who are heedless of their prayers because prayer is the pillar of the religion. If we carefully reflect on the prescribed prayers, we find them taking one hour out of twenty four hours a day. In other words, one can spend twenty-three hours in mundane affairs and one hour with Allah *the Almighty*. Logically, it is impermissible that mundane affairs consume this hour, causing heedlessness that leads directly to 'woe'. To conclude, the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: '...but are heedless of their prayer' (*al-Ma'un*: 5) refers to the people who offer prayer outwardly and formally without taking its inward aspects and its content into account. By doing so, they, in fact, deprive themselves of the humbleness gained by being in front of Allah, the energy obtained from faith and the Divine provisions that the worshippers are granted from their Lord *the Most High* while observing prayers.

Out of His *Glorified is He* Mercy towards His slaves, Allah *the Almighty* prescribes 'the woe' to those who are heedless about the prayer, not those who are heedless while offering it. That is why, when a Bedouin listened to this verse, he said, 'All Praise is due to Allah, as He says that they are heedless of the prayer and not heedless in it'. This is because all the people may be heedless in their prayer, even the people who are humble and who fully recognize the true right of the prayer and offer it in the best way, considering it the apple of their eyes. So what should we think about the laymen who may not perform it very well?!

Undoubtedly, Satan tries to divert the human being during the prayer as Satan is in conflict with the children of Adam and even swore to tempt them and to corrupt their acts of obedience. When Allah *the Almighty* cursed him and deprived him of His Mercy until the Day of Judgment, Allah states Satan saying: 'By Your Might, I will surely mislead them all, except Your chosen slaves among them' (*Sad*: 82-83). This is the oath of someone who knows Allah's Attributes and their functions perfectly. He swore by Allah's Might,

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 757, 793, 6251 and 6667; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 45/397.*

which entails His Self-Sufficiency, concerning the human beings obeying or disobeying. This is because their obedience does not avail Him, nor does their disobedience harm Allah *Glorified is He*. That is why Satan did not say, 'By Your Omnipotence and Mercy'. Additionally, if Allah *the Almighty* wants to guide any human being, Satan can never misguide him, as Satan said: '...except Your chosen slaves among them' (*Sad*: 83).

Satan also threatened the human beings, saying: '...I will surely sit in wait for them on Your Straight Path' (*al-A'raf*: 16). He sits in wait for us in the mosque to divert us from the Straight Path. Furthermore, he lies in wait for us in every act of worship we do. However, he does not lie in wait at the bars, for the people who go there are not in need of his tempting or seduction.

Clearly, heedlessness necessarily happens to the person while offering prayer; this is normal and does not affect the soundness of the prayer. In fact, it is a good token of faith. What is important is not to submit to Satan and his whispers by seeking refuge in Allah *the Almighty* from him. In this connection, remember the story of Abu Hanifa when a man came to him and said, 'O Imam, I have hidden my money in a place and forgot where it is'. Abu Hanifa laughed and said, 'This matter has nothing to do with knowledge, but I will do what I can. Go and perform the late night prayer, for Allah may guide you to where your money is'. The man stood before his Lord and Satan came to corrupt his prayer, whispering to him the place of the money. The man came to Abu Hanifa to tell him what happened. Thereupon he, that is Abu Hanifa, said, 'I knew he will not let you complete your prayers at night with your Lord'.

From the above we learn that the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'So woe to those who pray but are heedless of their prayer' (*al-Ma'un*: 4-5) directs man's attention to the fact that prayer is a time one is close to Allah *the Almighty*. Consequently, he must derive benefit from it by shunning any vanity or falsehood during it. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers and who keep aloof from what is vain' (*al-Mu'minun*: 1-3). This means any thought about anything but Allah during prayer is considered vain. After all, there is ample time for discussing mundane affairs after offering the prayers.

Next, the verses mention other descriptions of those ones who offer such a prayer, which are: '...those who [want nothing but] to be seen, and refuse

common kindnesses' (*al-Ma'un*: 6-7). The one who wants to be seen perfects the prayer formally, but does not perfect its content. Such a person wants to join the group of Muslims and enjoy Islamic rights in the society, although he is not a true believer. He takes into consideration how people observe him instead of regarding Allah's Ever-watchfulness over what he does. In other words, he loves to be seen by the people when he does good deeds. He loves to be praised by them; if this was not the case, he will have hidden his deeds.

His saying: '...and refuse common kindnesses' (*al-Ma'un*: 7) mentions another physical description which is related to pushing the orphan aside. It is as if the practical acts of the religious Way of Guidance become clearly manifested in physical matters. This is because the soul loves money by nature and is keen on collecting it. If one sacrifices his wealth to carry out Allah's Obligations, then he is following the true Way of Guidance. By contrast, if one is not ready to sacrifice his wealth, he should check his faith because this means he does not closely follow the Way of Guidance.

In the case of giving the orphans and the needy, the person gives out of his money, but in the case of common kindness and assistance, one voluntarily gives what has been bought by money. For example, when one lends a small gadget to his neighbour, the neighbour can return it after he makes use of it. The one who withholds such small acts of kindness is stingier than the one who pushes the orphan aside. The Arabic word '*al-ma'un*' (small kindness) refers to the kitchenware that can be borrowed because they are not found in every house. Some of these instruments are only needed once a year, and that is why the poor people do not buy them but rather borrow them.

If we reflect on this chapter, we find it contains economic principles that sustain the continuity of life in the universe. It also refers to the spiritual part of humbleness in the prayer and closeness to Allah *the Almighty*. If these two aspects are maintained, they will reform the society and the life, as well as the ruler and the subjects. This is because they will all recognize that they worship one God. This clearly shows the harmonious relationship between the chapter of *al-Ma'un* and that of *Quraysh*. The latter concluded with His saying: '...Who provides them with food to ward off hunger, and security to ward off fear' (*Quraysh*: 4).



We must always remember this truth: Allah provides us with food to ward off hunger and safety to ward off fear. As one enjoys His Blessings, he should not withhold them from the orphan, the needy and the poor. One should do what Allah loves in order to receive what he loves; if he gives out wealth, Allah *the Almighty* will provide him with more wealth. For this reason, the two chapters refer to opposite positions. There is a comparison between Allah's Generosity that provides us with food to ward off hunger and safety to ward off fear, and between the rude, unacceptable condition of the one who pushes the orphan aside, does not urge others to feed the needy, shows off when performing good deeds and forbids common kindness.

The chapter of *al-Kawthar*, which mentions another comparison, follows the chapter in question. The stinginess of the one who pushes the orphan aside and does not urge others to feed the needy is compared to Allah's saying: 'We have truly given *Al-Kawthar* to you [O Prophet Muhammad]' (*al-Kawthar*: 1). This verse refers to abundant goodness. In comparison to those who show off, sincerity is mentioned in His saying: '...so pray to your Lord and make your sacrifice to Him Alone' (*al-Kawthar*: 2). In the chapter in question, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...so woe to those who pray but are heedless of their prayer' (*al-Ma'un*: 4-5) while He says in the next chapter: '...so pray to your Lord ...' (*al-Kawthar*: 2). The former case refers to the prayer offered formally, while the latter verse refers to the prayer offered sincerely and perfectly. The objects are clarified by their opposites and the wise person should reflect on these comparisons.

We can say that Allah's saying: '...so pray to your Lord' (*al-Kawthar*: 2) is the opposite of: 'So woe to those who pray' (*al-Ma'un*: 4), and: '...to your Lord ...' (*al-Kawthar*: 2) is the opposite of '...those who [want nothing but] to be seen' (*al-Ma'un*: 6). When Allah *the Almighty* commands Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to offer prayer, this means that it should be done perfectly in the best possible way.

Moreover, we notice the similarity between the chapter of *al-Ma'un* and *al-Kawthar* as they both talk about a spiritual matter, which is prayer, and a material, economic aspect, which is spending. We invoke Allah *Glorified is He* to direct us to the Right Path, to guide us towards Him and His pleasure as honoured slaves, and not make His Obligations heavy on us, Amen!



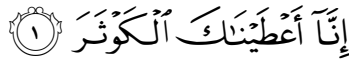
the chapter of

***al-Kawthar***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Kawthar* <sup>(1)</sup>:



**We have truly given abundance to you [Prophet] [1]  
(The Quran, *al-Kawthar*: 1)**

The relation between the chapter of *al-Ma'un* and that of *al-Kawthar* is one of comparison. In the former chapter, the Quran talks about the one who denies the Judgment, pushes the orphan aside and does not urge others to feed the needy. Moreover, it talks about showing off and stinginess to the extent of withholding even kitchenware. By contrast, the chapter of *al-Kawthar* mentions sincerity in worship as the opposite of showing off and giving wealth as the opposite of stinginess and withholding the small kindnesses.

In the chapter in question, Allah (God) <sup>(2)</sup> *the Almighty* wants to correct the earthly standards, replacing them by the heavenly ones, and people's standards,

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- (1) The chapter of *Al-Kawthar*, counting 3 verses and 10 words, is number 108 in the order of the *Mushaf* (the written copy of the Quran) and is the shortest chapter in the Quran. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *Al-'Adiyat*; it refers to Al-'As ibn Wa'il who described Prophet Muhammad's lineage, after the death of his son, 'Abdullah, as cut off.
- (2) The Islamic concept of 'Allah' is not the same as the Christian and Jewish concept of 'God'. But the word 'Allah' does not refer to a tribal god or the God of only Muslims; it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use 'Allah' rather than 'God' as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.

replacing them by the right ones, because the former standards are various and contradictory. As for the standard of the Truth, it is only one which has a single way of Guidance that has no contradictions at all. People's standards are deduced from their abilities, smartness and awareness about matters. Yet, as they differ due to their different whims, Allah *the Almighty* wanted to return us to His Standard and Way of Guidance.

The cause of revelation of this chapter is clarified through our awareness of the nature of Arab life in the pre-Islamic era. One of the aspects of their life was taking pride in sons and abundant offspring. They regarded the son a natural extension of the family after the death of its older members. That is why they used to say, 'The one who does not have a son will not be remembered'. This shows they cared about the lineages and even memorized them by heart. When Prophet Muhammad's sons died, the disbelievers wrongly rejoiced at his lineage being cut off. In their opinion, if his sons had not died, they will have taken up the banner of his Call after his death. Accordingly, when his sons died, the disbelievers said, 'Leave him [Prophet Muhammad] as his lineage is cut off; his mention will end with his death and his Call will cease to exist'.

This happened in the Meccan era of the Call. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* immigrated to Medina, Allah *the Almighty* granted him Ibrahim, his son from Mariya. In this way, Allah *the Almighty* refuted the claim of the disbelievers. However, when Ibrahim died, they repeated their claim. That is why some exegetes hold that the chapter of *al-Kawthar* was revealed twice, once in Mecca and once in Medina, following the disbelievers' statements at each time.

Allah *the Almighty* wanted to correct the misunderstanding of those people and to eliminate their ignorant standards. The correct standard in this regard is clearly manifested in the fact that the lineage of the Messengers and Prophets is not their sons but rather the believing followers of their Call who take up its banner and sacrifice their lives for it. This is the lineage endorsed by Allah *the Almighty*. Although Prophet Muhammad's biological lineage was cut off by the death of his sons, his lineage is continuous through a countless number of his followers who conveyed his Call and obeyed his commands during and

after his death, and who will continue to do so even up to the coming of the Hour. In this regard, I appreciate the statement of one of the Orientalists who said, ‘I am amazed by Muhammad; he still rules millions of people while he is dead in his grave’. This is the real mention that never ends. The stubborn disbelievers in Prophet Muhammad’s Call should consider the fact that their sons—whom they considered an extension to their mention—abandoned and disowned them. Their sons believed in Prophet Muhammad and obeyed him, sacrificing their souls and wealth for his Call. Furthermore, they considered their disbelieving fathers their enemies. Therefore, the chapter of *al-Kawthar* corrects the earthly standards, replacing them with the heavenly ones.

The Quran actually addresses this matter in the story of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), *peace be upon him*. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And [remember] when his Lord tried Ibrahim (Abraham) with certain words, which he fulfilled. He [Allah] said, “Surely, I will make you an Imam of men”. Ibrahim said, “And of my offspring?” He said, “My covenant does not include the unjust”’ (*al-Baqara*: 124). The unjust people can never be Imams or good examples for others to follow, even if they belong to the lineage of the Messengers and the Prophets. Indeed, the true offspring is that of faith.

Likewise, the Quran discusses this matter in the story of Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* and his son. Allah relates: ‘And Nuh (Noah) called out to his son, who stood aloof, “O my son! Embark with us and do not [stay] with the unbelievers”. He said, “I will betake myself to a mountain that shall protect me from the water”. Nuh (Noah) said, “There is no protector today from Allah’s punishment except for those on whom He has mercy”...’ (*Hud*: 42-43). Being the son of Prophet Nuh did not even protect him, and a wave intervened between them, making him one of those who drowned. Afterwards, Prophet Nuh invoked his Lord: ‘My Lord! Surely, my son is of my family, and Your Promise is surely true...’ (*Hud*: 45). The promise here is about saving his family. However, Allah *the Almighty* corrects Nuh’s standards in judging the matter, saying: ‘O Nuh (Noah)! Surely he is not of your family; surely he is (the doer of) other than good deeds...’ (*Hud*: 46). Allah *Glorified is He* set right the human standard and affirmed that the sonship on the part of the Prophets is that of obedience and faith, and not that of lineage.

According to this standard, Prophet Muhammad's offspring are countless; his mention will remain forever and his name will continue to be repeated to the end of time. It is sufficient for him that his name is said alongside Allah's Name. Every mue'dhdhin calling for prayer says, 'I bear witness that there is no god but Allah. I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah'. O you who say that Muhammad's lineage is cut off, is there a mention better than this one?! It is these disbelievers whose lineage has been cut off. The chapter in question mentions the high rank of Prophet Muhammad in the Hereafter. We have fully recognized this fact in the worldly life as an unseen matter which has been reported to us. When the Hereafter comes, all what has been reported to us will become a reality.

In this chapter, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to offer solace to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and to alleviate the effect of the disbelievers' statement. That is why He *the Almighty* addresses the Prophet, saying: 'We have truly given *al-Kawthar* to you [O Prophet Muhammad]' (*al-Kawthar*: 1). The One Who gives here is Allah *the Almighty* the one given that reward is Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the reward is *al-Kawthar* (a river in paradise). The word *al-Kawthar* means an abundant goodness that is great and encompasses all aspects of abundance, like wealth, power, health, children, etc.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'We have truly given *al-Kawthar* to you [O Prophet Muhammad]' (*al-Kawthar*: 1) means that Allah *the Almighty* has given Prophet Muhammad abundant goodness and even more. This includes all the abundant kinds of graces and what is even more. For this reason, it is narrated that Anas *Allah be pleased with him* said about Prophet Muhammad, 'One day the Messenger of Allah was sitting among us and then he dozed off. He then raised his head, smiling. We said, "What makes you smile?" He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "A chapter has just been revealed to me", and then he recited: "In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. We have truly given *al-Kawthar* to you [O Prophet Muhammad]" (*al-Kawthar*: 1). Then Prophet Muhammad explained, "Do you know what *al-Kawthar* is?" We said, "Allah and His Messenger know best". He said, "It is a river in paradise which my Lord has given



me. Its water is whiter than milk and its taste is better than honey... the one who drinks from it will never be thirsty again”<sup>(1)</sup>.

However, Muslim scholars differ as to the meaning of *al-Kawthar* as follows: Ibn 'Abbas said, ‘It is a river in paradise’. Based on this opinion, it is as if *al-Kawthar* is an abundant, great object and the river is part of it. But why did Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* interpret *al-Kawthar* as a river? This is because the people might have interpreted it as prophethood, the Quran being given to him or even the high rank he was given by his name being mentioned in the two Testimonies of Faith. All these meanings were already known to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Consequently, he interpreted *al-Kawthar* as a river because it is the new meaning that was unknown to him, since it was an unseen matter. That is, he did not interpret it as a tangible matter but as an unseen one that he perceived through revelation.

The word *Kawthar* may not mean what is additional to abundant goodness but rather refers to gathering all the aspects of this abundant goodness. In this sense, it refers to prophethood, the Revelation, the Quran, raising Prophet Muhammad’s reputation and increasing the number of his followers who mention his name and draw close to Allah by invoking blessings upon him. This word actually bears all these meanings, which are known to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Besides, he added the meaning that was reported to him from Allah *the Almighty* that is, *al-Kawthar* is a river in paradise. He was keen on clarifying this new meaning by asking the Companions, ‘Do you know what *al-Kawthar* is?’ He wanted to clarify its meaning as intended in the chapter in question because it is different from the linguistic meaning which was known to them. For this reason, he said, ‘It is a river in paradise which Allah *Glorified is He* has given me’.

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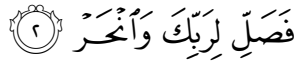
(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him. In the Hadith the Prophet Muhammad said, ‘It (Al-Kawthar) is a river which my Lord has promised me, and there is an abundance of good in it. It is a cistern and my people will come to it on the Day of Resurrection. The [number of] tumblers there will be equal to the number of stars. A slave will be turned away from (among the people gathered there). Upon this I will say, “My Lord, he is one of my people,” and He (the Lord) will say, You do not know that he created new things (innovations in Islam) after you”’. See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 53/400.*

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* wants to confirm the matter of giving Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that abundant reward. That is why He does not say, '*Al-Kawthar* was given to you [O Prophet Muhammad]', but rather: 'We have truly given *al-Kawthar* to you [O Prophet Muhammad]' (*al-Kawthar*: 1). The Doer of the action was stressed to confirm the action. When you find that the plural pronoun 'We' is used to refer to Allah *the Almighty* you should know fully well that it is followed by a great, mighty action, as this pronoun of glorification should be naturally followed by a great matter. His saying: 'We have truly given...' (*al-Kawthar*: 1) indicates clearly that this reward is proportional to the Giver, and His Omnipotence and Power over His Kingdom.

For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* says about the Quran: 'Surely, We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian' (*al-Hijr*: 9). The pronoun of glorification (We) is mentioned twice in this verse to indicate a great action that requires many Divine Attributes, like Power, Wisdom, Might, Giving and Withholding. That is, the pronoun 'We' gathers all the Attributes that the action needs. Allah *the Almighty* possesses all the Attributes of Perfection. By contrast, when He *Glorified is He* talks about monotheism or worship, He employs a singular pronoun, saying, for example: 'Surely I am Allah, there is no god but I, therefore serve Me ...' (*Ta Ha*: 14). Here, He does not say, 'We are Allah', because He *the Almighty* is referring to something concerning His Essence, which is One, and thus the singular pronoun is appropriate.

In the verse in question, Allah's saying: 'We have truly given...' (*al-Kawthar*: 1) indicates that this Bestowal from Him is eternal, everlasting and ceaseless, a fact which is clear in His saying: 'What is with you passes away and what is with Allah is enduring...' (*an-Nahl*: 96). The Lord *the Almighty* does not give from a limited amount that can run out and come to an end; rather, His Treasuries are full and everlasting. This is because Allah *the Almighty* is the Everlasting and the Provider of sustenance. This means His Bestowal is abundant and unfailing; it is neither cut off nor exhaustible.

Next, Allah *the Almighty* says:



**So pray to your Lord and make your sacrifice to  
Him alone [2] (The Quran, *al-Kawthar*: 2)**

Using the imperative form, after Allah's saying: 'We have truly given *al-Kawthar* to you [O Prophet Muhammad]' (*al-Kawthar*: 1), is natural in this context. As a matter of fact, the process of the Divine Bestowal on Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* entails a Giver, a person who is given and a reward. The Giver is Allah *the Almighty* the one who is given is Prophet Muhammad, and the reward is abundant good. The Grace of Allah *the Almighty* suits His Unlimited Giving. As such, it is an endless, unfailing Giving. It derived its abundance and comprehensiveness from the Giver *Glorified is He*. Hence, the Bestowal here is proportional to the Giver.

Due to these abundant, great blessings, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'So pray to your Lord and make your sacrifice to Him Alone' (*al-Kawthar*: 2). This command is related to fulfilling the due right of the Giver and then spending from the abundant good. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has been commanded to carry out such actions as a result of these blessings which were given to him; he should mention the blessings of the Giver *Glorified is He* devote his worship to Him and draw close to Him. Consequently, with regards to Allah's saying: 'So pray to your Lord...' (*al-Kawthar*: 2), it means that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* should at least be connected to the Giver by offering prayer and thanks to Him due to His Blessings.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...and make your sacrifice to Him Alone' (*al-Kawthar*: 2), sacrifice is a way of spending from what the Giver has given Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and give them from the wealth of Allah which He has given you...' (*an-Nur*: 33), and: '...do good (to others) as Allah has done good to you...' (*al-Qasas*: 77). That is, just as the Lord *Glorified is He* has given you, extend your bestowals to other people.

Giving from the bestowals related to what the soul deeply loves and tends to stingily refuse to give is very heavy on the soul. It is easy for the person to help the people with his knowledge, effort or time. However, it is difficult for

him to spend from his wealth, as the soul loves money deeply and clings to it. Furthermore, when a scholar answers a question, his knowledge does not decrease; rather, it increases and becomes firmer. By answering the questions, the scholar takes a high position with Allah and in the people's eyes yet without losing anything, for his knowledge remains.

On the contrary, the one who gives from his money transmits part of his wealth to the given person, and that is why spending is a heavy matter on the soul. No one can do that except the people of faith and piety who have a strong relationship with Allah and put their trust in Him, firmly believing that He is the Original Giver. Consequently, the believer gives out of reassurance about the recompense of the Giver Who provides endlessly. He is connected to the Giver who bestows in proportion to His Abilities, and he waits for Allah's Bestowal that befits His Abilities.

In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Allah helps His slave as long as he helps his brother'.<sup>(1)</sup> Moreover, righteous people have said, 'I made the people become used to receiving my bestowals and Allah made me become used to receiving His Bestowals. And I do not want to stop what I usually give to the people so that Allah will not withhold what He usually gives to me'.

Scholars hold two views about this verse in question. Some of them opine that it is a general verse referring to prayer and slaughtering the animal in general. Some others maintain that it is revealed specifically in reference to the *Eid* Prayer and the sacrificing of *Al-Udhiya* (sacrificial animal). The latter opinion limits the application of the command in the verse while it is actually general. Prophet Muhammad's relationship with Allah is not only based on carrying out the Divine Obligations; rather, he *peace and blessings be upon him* reached the highest rank of closeness to Allah. Prophet Muhammad has a high rank as a Messenger who delivers a Message to the people and as a Prophet who has special privileges granted by Allah *Glorified is He*.

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 7427, 7701, 7942, 10496 and 10667; Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 225; Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 4946 and At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1425, 1930 and 2945.*

The follower of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* can worship Allah *the Almighty* through the prescribed obligations and then voluntarily offer additional acts of worship. These acts of worship are more expected from Prophet Muhammad himself. Allah *the Almighty* prescribed two kinds of worship on him *peace and blessings be upon him*. The first kind is shared by all his followers, which is embedded in the Message he was commanded to convey to the people. The other kind of worship was special for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself as a Prophet. It consisted of the religious obligations he was commanded to carry out himself without conveying them to his followers. An example of this is his saying, ‘Should I not be a thankful slave of Allah?’<sup>(1)</sup>

In the chapter under discussion, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘So pray to your Lord and make your sacrifice to Him Alone’ (*al-Kawthar*: 2). This verse refers to offering prayer and sacrificing in general. As Allah *the Almighty* has given Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* an abundant, unlimited reward, we should not limit the application of the commands to a specific prayer and sacrifice.

We have previously said that *al-Kawthar* also means the prophethood, messengership and the Quran. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not preserve this reward for himself but rather has given it to his followers. Indeed, he gave a share of every honour which Allah *the Almighty* granted to him to his followers. Consequently, it is not befitting here to limit the broad meaning that Allah *the Almighty* intends as a general, abundant reward befitting the abundant provision. As the abundant reward is comprehensive, the prayer should be offered frequently whenever one’s soul inclines to offer it, be it obligatory or supererogatory.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...and make your sacrifice to Him Alone’ (*al-Kawthar*: 2), it means to do the act of Sacrifice whenever one has

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(1) *Al-Mughira ibn Shu'ba narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him used to offer night prayers till his feet became swollen. Somebody said to him, 'Allah has forgiven you your faults of the past and those that will follow'. On that he said, 'Should I not be a thankful slave [of Allah]?' See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 1130, 4836 and 6471; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 79/2819.*

the ability to do it, be it in the prescribed time of *Udhiya* or any other time. This ensures that the required acts of worships suit the given bestowals. As *al-Kawthar* is as an abundant, endless good, the prayer should also be offered frequently in order that one has a continuous relationship with Allah *the Almighty*.

After this, the Lord *the Most High* says:



**It is the one who hates you who has been cut off [3]  
(The Quran, *al-Kawthar*: 3)**

The verse means that the lineage of the one who hates Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will be cut off. We have talked about the cause of revelation of this chapter. It was revealed to correct the human standard by endorsing Allah's Standard, that is, the real mention is not maintained by the lineage but rather by the person's lofty reputation and actions. In this sense, Prophet Muhammad's lineage is not cut off because he will be continuously mentioned among his followers. The one who accused him of this description is the one whose lineage will be cut off.

Prophet Muhammad's mention has remained on his followers' tongues and in their hearts, even after his death—in every call to Prayer and in every moment his name is mentioned. Whenever we mention his name or one of his rulings, we say, 'Peace and blessings be upon him'. How can his lineage be cut off?! The mention of any disbeliever only lasts as long as their children remember him in the worldly life. As for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he will continue to be mentioned until the coming of the Hour and even to the Hereafter. Moreover, his mention will be raised on the Day of Judgment over all the humanity, from Adam to the coming of the Hour. All the Prophets will refuse to intercede on behalf of the people, except Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This means his mention will transcend his followers to include the people before him and after him.

We notice that the Quran responds to the one who accused Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of this description in a special manner. It does not state, 'Muhammad has not been cut off'; rather it says:

‘We have truly given *al-Kawthar* to you [O Prophet Muhammad]’ (*al-Kawthar*: 1). The one given the *al-Kawthar* can never be cut off. It is enough compensation that he *peace and blessings be upon him* was given that reward in return for the disbelievers’ description of him with this quality.

Moreover, Allah’s expression transcended this point to include another aspect, that is, the opponent who slandered Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and harboured hatred and grudge against him. Allah *Glorified is He* responds to him, saying: ‘It is the one who hates you who has been cut off’ (*al-Kawthar*: 3). The Lord *Glorified is He* describes such a slanderer with that of which he falsely accused Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, there is a double benefit here, which is refuting the accusation against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and describing his slanderer himself with that quality.

Let us reflect on the Quranic expression: ‘It is the one who hates you ...’ (*al-Kawthar*: 3). Such a person hated Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as a person, not because of the Way of Guidance or the Call with which the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent. That is why the disbelievers said: ‘And they say, “Why was this Quran not revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) They hated Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as a person. We may ask why. This is because the Quran overwhelmed them with its argument and proof. They failed to defame it by saying it is poetry, sorcery, soothsaying, etc. After they could not find any fault in the Quran, they accused and slandered Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. For this reason, they fully recognized that the Quran was sent down by Allah, which is why they, as clearly mentioned in the Quran, said: ‘If we follow the guidance with you, we shall be carried off from our country...’ (*al-Qasas*: 57).

Their hatred and grudge against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* proved that their views were contradictory. Before being sent as a Messenger, they loved Prophet Muhammad and called him, ‘the truthful, honest person’. They entrusted their wealth to him and highly respected him. However, after the coming of the Message, they harboured grudge and hatred against him.

When the Quran addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: 'It is the one who hates you who has been cut off' (*al-Kawthar*: 3), it responds to the disbelievers with what they accused the Prophet of; the children they took pride in and regarded as an extension of their mention in the worldly life will rebel against them and pledge loyalty to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Their love for Prophet Muhammad will raise his mention, and not that of their disbelieving fathers.

This is what really took place as many of their sons, like Khalid, 'Amr and 'Ikrima, embraced Islam. Khalid did not take pride in Al-Walid, and 'Ikrima did not take pride in Abu Jahl. That is to say that they did not take pride in their fathers and lineages. Rather, they took pride in and were loyal to Islam and to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It is as if their real fathers did not belong to their lineage or even play a part in their lives.

The books of history relate that when 'Ikrima was fighting with Khalid ibn Al-Walid in the battle of Al-Yarmuk, he was stabbed. When he lay on his deathbed, he was only pre-occupied with Prophet Muhammad and if the Prophet was pleased with him. He said to Khalid, 'Do you think my way of death makes Prophet Muhammad pleased with me?' Where, then, is the mention of his father, Abu Jahl? Who, then, is the one whose lineage has been cut off?!

The ruling in Allah's saying: 'It is the one who hates you who has been cut off' (*al-Kawthar*: 3) is applicable in any situation as long as its cause exists. Anyone who hates Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will be cut off. This ruling is not confined to the cause of revelation of these verses. Rather, it is general, as consideration is given to the generality of the wordings and not the specificity of the cause of revelation.

But what if the one who hated Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* embraced Islam, became a good Muslim, and loved the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*? Scholars say that the existence and the absence of the ruling depend on its cause. Thus, the description of being cut off is eliminated for such a person as his hatred for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has ceased to exist. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Embracing Islam cancels what precedes it'.<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) See Ahmad, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 17813 and 17827; *Al-Bayhaqi, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra*, Hadith no., 18290, and *Dala'il An-Nubuwwa*, 4/343.



However, the verses apparently indicate that those persons referred to who slandered Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will die in a state of disbelief. The description in the verses in question will not be negated from them. It is as if the verses allude to this fact. This is what actually happened in reality. The disbelievers like Al-Aswad ibn Al-Muttalib, Umayya ibn Khalaf, Al-‘As ibn Wa’il and Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira died in a state of disbelief.



the chapter of

***al-Kafirun***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Kafirun*<sup>(1)</sup>:

قُلْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿١﴾ لَا اَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿٢﴾  
وَلَا اَنْتُمْ عٰبِدُوْنَ مَا اَعْبُدُ ﴿٣﴾ وَلَا اَنَا عٰبِدُ مَا عَبَدْتُمْ ﴿٤﴾  
وَلَا اَنْتُمْ عٰبِدُوْنَ مَا اَعْبُدُ ﴿٥﴾ لَكُمْ دِيْنُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِيْنِ ﴿٦﴾

**Say [Prophet], ‘Disbelievers [1] I do not worship what you  
worship [2] you do not worship what I worship [3] I will never  
worship what you worship [4] you will never worship what I  
worship [5] you have your religion and I have mine [6]  
(The Quran, *al-Kafirun*: 1- 6)**

We have concluded from the chapter of *Al-Kawthar* that the people are of two kinds: those who are cut off from Allah (God)<sup>(2)</sup> in the worldly life and the Hereafter and those who are connected to Him *Glorified is He* in both of them. These are antithetical types which cannot have the same way in

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(1) The chapter of *Al-Kafirun*, counting 6 verses and 27 words, is number 109 in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *Al-Ma'un* and before that of *Al-Fil*. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said that the one who reads this chapter is similar to the one who reads one-quarter of the Quran. See At-Tabarani, *Al-Mu'jam As-Saghir*, *Hadith no. 165*.

(2) The Islamic concept of ‘Allah’ is not the same as the Christian and Jewish concept of ‘God’. But the word ‘Allah’ does not refer to a tribal god or the God of only Muslims; it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use ‘Allah’ rather than ‘God’ as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.

their lives, creed, rituals, worship and approach, followed when interpreting events or principles.

Next, the chapter of *Al-Kafirun* clarifies the distinction between both types and separates them. This is what is diplomatically called 'cutting the relations', meaning that there is no room for reconciliation or concessions. However, cutting the diplomatic relations could be temporary due to a current situation that might foster a good relation later on. In the future, some developments may lead to re-establishing diplomatic relations. This is due to the fact that people's conditions are always changing because they cannot control events. In other words, their thoughts change because they do not know future events. As for Prophet Muhammad, he is connected with Allah *the Almighty* and this enabled him to be steadfast concerning his actions and principles. For example, when Prophet Muhammad conveys a matter to do with the creed, he cannot change it because it has come from Allah *the Almighty* and not from him *peace and blessings be upon him*.

It is as if the matter of reconciliation with the disbelievers has been decisively rejected and is not negotiable, either in the present or in the future. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says here: 'Say [O Prophet Muhammad], "O Disbelievers, I do not worship what you worship"' (*al-Kafirun*: 1-2). We are fully aware of the fact that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* holds the opposite stance of the disbelievers; he will not worship what they worship either in the present or the future. Scholars say that the cause of the revelation of this chapter is that the disbelievers offered for them to worship Allah for one year and for Prophet Muhammad to worship their idols for another year, or for the Prophet to prostrate to their idols in return for them prostrating to Allah. That is to say that they wanted to divide the worship according to the time, or the time according to the worship.

The matter is related to worship, which is the essence of matters in the creed and is thus not prone to change, unlike some other religious legislations. This is due to the fact that all the Messages from Adam to Prophet Muhammad unanimously agree about worshipping Allah *the Almighty* Alone, without any partner. This fact never changes according to the change of conditions, situations or legislations. It is as if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is

saying to the disbelievers, ‘The matter is not negotiable, for I did not initiate my worship of Allah by myself, my ideas and ways. By contrast, you invented the worship of idols by yourselves. As such, my soul took no part in initiating my worship of Allah while your souls play a part in your worship of idols. Moreover, did I worship your false deities before being sent as a Messenger in order for you to hope I will worship them now after being sent to you with a Way of Guidance based on worshipping Allah Alone without no partner?! Accordingly, the disagreement is not between you and me but rather between you and Allah, for I am only a conveyer of His Message. If you want to negotiate this matter, do that with the One Who has this right. I do not have the right to set the rulings of worship as you have set the rulings for worshipping idols. You are free to change your falsehood, but I am not free to change my worship, as I am a conveyer of a Message on behalf of Allah’.

For this reason, the Quran employs the imperative, ‘say’, to clearly indicate that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* firmly adheres to the exact saying of Allah *the Almighty* when conveying the Message. If the Quran had said, ‘Disbelievers, I do not worship what you worship’, then this will also mean that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* conveys this Message from Allah *the Almighty*. However, the imperative ‘say’ is used to signify that this ruling is not that of Prophet Muhammad; rather, he conveys it from Allah *the Almighty*.

Furthermore, the disbelievers’ negotiating with him *peace and blessings be upon him* over worshipping their idols for one year and Allah for another is unacceptable. This is because they were fully aware of Allah’s Divinity, as the Quran relates: ‘And if you should ask them who created them, they will certainly say, “Allah”...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 87), and: ‘And if you ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they will certainly say, “Allah”...’ (*Luqman*: 25). This means they fully recognized the true God, but Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not recognize the divinity of their idols. As the two stances are not equal, how can negotiation be possible?!

We should note the structure used in Allah’s saying: ‘Say [O Prophet Muhammad], “O (ya) Disbelievers”’ (*al-Kafirun*: 1). Calling someone using the Arabic particle ‘ya’ (O!) could be used as a form of respect or to humiliate

the person. This is because this particle is used to call a person who is far away. It is used as a form of respect for the one having a high rank, and to humiliate the one who is distant from Allah *the Almighty*. For example, when Allah *the Almighty* addresses Prophet Muhammad, saying, 'O Messenger', or 'O Prophet', this indicates his lofty rank. As for Allah's saying: 'Say [O Prophet Muhammad], "O Disbelievers"' (*al-Kafirun*: 1), this is a form of humiliation due to them being far away from Allah *the Almighty*.

Allah's saying: 'Say [O Prophet Muhammad], "O Disbelievers"' (*al-Kafirun*: 1) is a way of attracting their attention, because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went to their gathering and wanted to declare he had severed relations with them. Prophet Muhammad called them in order that they will pay attention to him. Then he *peace and blessings be upon him* labelled them with the awful description, 'disbelievers'. He did not say, 'Those who disbelieve', as they were not believers earlier. That is, their disbelief is an inherent description of them.

The word 'disbelief' alludes to the natural disposition of Belief because the former means to cover and conceal something. It is as if disbelief conceals the obvious Belief. The human being is a believer by nature, but disbelief may inflict him and conceal his belief. As disbelief came after Belief, then the disbelievers changed the Way of the Messengers that naturally corresponds to the natural disposition.

As for Allah's saying: 'I do not worship what you worship. You do not worship what I worship' (*al-Kafirun*: 2-3), it means that in the present time there is no way of reconciliation from both sides. This is because their perception of divinity is totally different from that of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. While his way of guidance is from Allah, they set a way for themselves. This situation is not reconcilable because this requires that both parties change their stance. This is only possible between the people; however, with regards to Allah's Way of Guidance, Allah *the Almighty* is Unchangeable. It is the human beings who should change for the sake of Allah *Glorified is He* and not vice versa.

As for Allah's saying: 'I will never worship what you worship. You will never worship what I worship' (*al-Kafirun*: 4-5), it refers to future time. Thus,



there is no hope for resuming negotiations, for the severing of relations is continuous, both in the present and the future. Negating that they have Belief, even in the future, alludes that they will not believe and will die in a state of disbelief. That is why the chapter in question is concluded with Allah's saying: 'You have your religion and I have mine' (*al-Kafirun*: 6), which clearly indicates that the two parties will never reconcile concerning the issue of worship.

However, the difference referred to in the Lord's saying: 'You have your religion and I have mine' (*al-Kafirun*: 6) is confined to those who negotiated with Prophet Muhammad from the disbelievers, apart from the other disbelievers and their offspring. That is why this chapter was followed by that of *An-Nasr* to give the glad tidings that the people will embrace Allah's Religion in crowds, including even the disbelievers' children and grandchildren. This means that disbelief will come to an end and will not continue to confront the camp of Belief all the time. Indeed, a time will come when the religion will be one—for Allah *the Almighty Alone*. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'When Allah's Help [leading to victory] comes and He opens up [the gates of Mecca for] you [O Prophet Muhammad]' (*an-Nasr*: 1) in order to give us the glad tidings and reassure the believers' hearts that the ultimate outcome will be the victory of the true religion; and the historical events proved this fact.



the chapter of

***an-Nasr***



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

**T**he chapter of *an-Nasr*<sup>(1)</sup>:

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ ﴿١﴾ وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي  
دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا ﴿٢﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا ﴿٣﴾

**When God's help comes and He opens up your way  
[Prophet] [1] when you see people embracing God's faith  
in crowds [2] celebrate the praise of your Lord and ask His  
forgiveness: He is always ready to accept repentance [3]  
(The Quran, *an-Nasr*: 1 - 3)**

The chapter of *An-Nasr* is harmoniously related to the end of the chapter of *Al-Kafirun*. When Allah (God)<sup>(2)</sup> the Almighty says: 'You have your religion and I have mine' (*al-Kafirun*: 6), this constitutes a final severing of relations with the disbelievers. However, we should not think that the condition will remain like that, that is, with a disbelieving group who has cut themselves off from Allah and a believing one connected with Him *Glorified is He*. The chapter of *An-Nasr* tells us that Allah's Religion will be victorious and the

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(1) The chapter of *An-Nasr*, counting 3 verses and 19 words, is number 110 in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Medina after the chapter of *At-Tawba*. It was revealed after the Liberation of Mecca.

(2) The Islamic concept of 'Allah' is not the same as the Christian and Jewish concept of 'God'. But the word 'Allah' does not refer to a tribal god or the God of only Muslims; it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use 'Allah' rather than 'God' as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.

people will embrace His religion in crowds. Ultimately, the disbelieving camp will come to an end.

Allah *the Almighty* ordered the chapters of the Quran logically, in order for them to harmoniously correlate with each other. Every chapter is harmonious with the one before it. The Lord *Glorified is He* says at the beginning of this chapter: 'When Allah's Help [leading to victory] comes and He opens up [the gates of Mecca for] you [O Prophet Muhammad], and when you see people embracing Allah's Religion in crowds' (*an-Nasr*: 1-2). This is a glad tiding for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* during the most difficult times of the Call when his followers were being severely prosecuted by the disbelievers. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* unveiled the unseen for him and showed him the imminent victory of his followers. Then He *Glorified is He* commands Prophet Muhammad to praise Him *Glorified is He* and seek His Forgiveness as a way of thanking Him for granting victory to this religion and making its word uppermost.

We know that the prophecies and the glad tidings tell us about future events. Information about the unseen is frequently mentioned in the Book of Allah. We have said that the Unseen has three aspects: one related to the place, another to the past and a third to the future. These factors prevent the human being from knowing the unseen. As for the Creator, these factors are not applicable to Him, for nothing is hidden from Him at any place or time.

The Quran discusses the issue of the past when it addresses Prophet Muhammad, saying: 'And you did not recite before this any book, nor did you transcribe one with your right hand, for then could those who say untrue things have doubted' (*al-'Ankabut*: 48). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not previously know about the events that happened earlier; he neither heard nor read a book about them. Accordingly, his knowledge about these past events comes from Allah *the Almighty*.

That is why the phrase: 'you were not' has been repeated in the Quran to emphasise this matter, as in His saying: 'And you were not on the western side when We revealed to Musa (Moses) the commandment, and you were not among the witnesses' (*al-Qasas*: 44), as well as: '...and you were not dwelling among the people of Midyan...' (*al-Qasas*: 45), and: '...and you

were not with them when they cast their pens (to decide) which of them should have Mariam (Mary)...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 44). Thus, the knowledge received from Allah *the Almighty* unveiled one side of the unseen that the people of falsehood could never doubt when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told them about it. This is because they knew for sure that he could not read or write and that no one could tell him about these events. Accordingly, it was clear that his only source was Allah *the Almighty*.

Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* removed the veil of place and informed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about some unseen matters, as in His saying: ‘Have you not seen those who are forbidden secret counsels but then return to what they were forbidden. And they hold secret counsels to [commit] sin, revolt, and disobedience to the Messenger [Muhammad]. And when they come to you they greet you with a greeting with which Allah does not greet you, and they say in themselves, “Why does Allah not punish us for what we say?”...’ (*al-Mujadala*: 8) This verse discusses a matter in the present that was veiled from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with the veil of place, for how could he know their private talks and their inward speech?! However, Allah *the Almighty* told the Prophet about that. This is an uncovering of the veil of place that veils and covers present events.

As for the veil of the future, the future events are uncontrollable. This is because their events depend on many elements that control them, like the doer, the object of the action, the cause and the effective power. In reality, man does not possess or guarantee any of these elements. Therefore, how can he guarantee all of them in order for the event he prophesised to come to pass? The Quran teaches us to be courteous when we speak about the future and even sets the precautionary measure that protects us from telling lies, saying: ‘And never say of anything, “Indeed, I will do that tomorrow”, except [when adding], “If Allah wills”...’ (*al-Kahf*: 23-24). Adding Allah’s Will is a way of referring all the elements of the events to the One Who possesses them. The future with regards to Allah *Glorified is He* is like the past. This means that if Allah *the Almighty* tells us about a future event, it will inevitably come to pass, as if it has already happened. An example of this is the use of the past tense in His saying about the Day of Judgment: ‘Allah’s Commandment has come, therefore do not desire to hasten it...’ (*al-Isra*: 1).

In the chapter of *An-Nasr*, Allah *the Almighty* tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the future of his Call, affirming its victory and that it will become established and be triumphant—after the oppression, persecution and besiege of the believers. During that straitened state, they had almost lost hope of victory. However, out of the overwhelming darkness comes the light of the daybreak; the revelation descends on Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: ‘When Allah’s Help [leading to victory] comes and He opens up [the gates of Mecca for] you [O Prophet Muhammad], and when you see people embracing Allah’s Religion in crowds, exalt and praise your Lord and plead to Him for forgiveness: He is always ready to accept repentance’ (*an-Nasr*: 1-3).

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will never risk his Call by prophesizing some events that will not come to pass. He did not prophesise the victory of his Call except when he became sure about this reality through revelation. In other words, it is the revelation that assured Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that his Call will eventually be victorious. We know for certain that no power can oppose Allah *Glorified is He* or even repel the action He wills. When Allah’s saying: ‘When Allah’s Help [leading to victory] comes and He opens up [the gates of Mecca for] you [O Prophet Muhammad]’ (*an-Nasr*: 1) was revealed to Prophet Muhammad, it became part of the Quran which is recited and reading it became an act of worship. It is as if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* recorded this prophecy for himself only because he was absolutely sure it will come to pass; if it did not come to pass, the Caller and the Call will both come to an end.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘When Allah’s Help [leading to victory] comes and He opens up [the gates of Mecca for] you [O Prophet Muhammad]’ (*an-Nasr*: 1) is one of the signs of prophethood because it was revealed before the realization of victory and the Opening of the gates of Mecca. This chapter has a hidden and apparent meaning. We want to know the meaning of ‘*nasr*’ (victory), ‘*fath*’ (opening the city gates), ‘*tasbih*’ (glorification), ‘*tahmad*’ (praising), ‘*istighfar*’ (seeking forgiveness) and ‘*tawba*’ (repentance). We want to know the apparent and the hidden meaning of this chapter.

We say that ‘victory’ indicates there was fighting between two groups in a battle whose outcome is the victory of one group and the defeat of the other.



As for '*al-fath*' (opening of the gates), it refers to people embracing Islam without any fighting happening. That is, the verse gives Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the glad tidings of both victory and the opening of the gates. The former indicates power and the latter indicates peace. One may say, 'The opponents of Prophet Muhammad accepted the status quo and had they confronted him, they will have defeated him'. To conclude, the Divine Wisdom entailed giving two kinds of support for Prophet Muhammad's Call, one in times of peace and another in times of war.

For this reason, if we review the history of the Islamic Call, we find that it spread all over the world in a way unmatched by any other call throughout history. This spread entailed two aspects: the military power of the liberators, and the principles and values that attracted the people to Allah's Religion. They considered the Call a way of salvation from their corrupt state. Even the Arab tribes surrounding Mecca in the Arabian Peninsula were waiting for the end of the conflict between Quraysh and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. They said, 'Let us wait; if Quraysh defeats him, they will stop him on our behalf. But if he becomes victorious, we will follow his Call for in such a case it is the Truth'. After the victory of Prophet Muhammad, they hastily embraced Allah's Religion in crowds. Before that, they were disunited. To conclude, the victory is related to the battlefield while the opening of the gates is related to people embracing Islam without any fighting happening.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...and when you see people embracing Allah's Religion in crowds, exalt and praise your Lord and plead to Him for His Forgiveness: He is always ready to accept repentance' (*an-Nasr*: 2-3). In this regard, Aisha narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to frequently say near the end of his life, 'Allah is Perfect and His is the praise. I seek Allah's Forgiveness and I turn to Him in repentance'. Telling about the reason why he frequently said this statement, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'My Lord has told me that I will see a sign among my followers. He commanded me to exalt and praise Him and to plead to Him for Forgiveness when I see it. I have already seen it'. He then recited: 'When Allah's Help [leading to victory] comes and He opens up [the gates of Mecca for] you [O Prophet Muhammad]' (*an-Nasr*: 1).

Exalting Allah *the Almighty* means holding Him far above the attributes that do not befit Him, which are the fluctuating attributes of the created beings. As for praising Him, it means to mention His Attributes of Perfection and Benevolence. That is, exalting means negating flaws, while praising means affirming the Attributes of Perfection.

With regards to Allah's saying: 'Exalt and praise your Lord' (*an-Nasr*: 2), the formula of praising Him is not set by human beings. This is because praising Allah *the Almighty* requires awareness of His Attributes, in order to be able to praise Him using appropriate descriptions of Him. Praising also entails using the manner of expressions that befits this matter. But who can fully comprehend the excellence of Allah's Attributes? If one were able to comprehend them, will he be able to use the manner of expression befitting the praise of the Lord of Might and Majesty?! Of course, no one can do that. Thus, out of Allah's Mercy, He taught us how to praise Him, which is to say, 'All Praise is due to Allah'. In other words, Allah *the Almighty* taught us how to praise Him and did not let our different ways of expression and abilities in using the language dictate how to praise Him *Glorified is He*. If this was not the case, what sin will the illiterate person or the child have committed to not be able to express his praise of Allah *the Almighty*? By Allah teaching us how to praise Him, the eloquent people have no privilege over other people with regards to praising the Lord *the Most High* because He has set the formula for all people.

Therefore, His saying: 'Exalt and praise your Lord...' (*an-Nasr*: 3) means that we should praise Him using the expression He has prescribed. That is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to invoke Allah saying, 'I cannot enumerate Your Praises for You are as You have praised Yourself'.<sup>(1)</sup> Another possible interpretation is that we should praise Him along with exalting Him.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...and plead to Him for Forgiveness: He is always ready to accept repentance' (*an-Nasr*: 3). It is known that the reason for the command should suit the command itself, which is why the statement

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her. See Malik, Muwat', Hadith no. 620; Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 24312; and Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3841.*

in question should have been as follows, ‘Ask His Forgiveness because He is All-Forgiving’, or, ‘Repent to Him because He accepts repentance’. However, the verse was not revealed in this way. We may ask why. Scholars say that this a rhetoric style in which two subjects are mentioned, each one of them having two elements. The context mentions one element of each subject and omits its opposite, as in His saying: ‘Indeed, there was a sign for you in the two hosts which met together [in combat]: one party fighting in the way of Allah and the other unbelieving ...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 13).

The implicit meaning of the verse is that there is one party fighting in the Way of Allah and another fighting in the way of Satan. Moreover, we have a believing party and a disbelieving one. The Quranic context omitted the attribute ‘believing’ from the first party, only mentioning that it ‘fights in the Way of Allah’. However, it mentioned the attribute ‘unbelieving’ and omitted ‘fighting in the way of Satan’ for the second party. Every mentioned element indicates the omitted one. The attribute ‘unbelieving’ indicates the omission of ‘believing’, and ‘in the Way of Allah’ indicates ‘in the way of Satan’.

Likewise, His saying: ‘...and plead to Him for Forgiveness: He is always ready to accept repentance’ (*an-Nasr*: 3) implicitly means, ‘Plead to Him for Forgiveness because He is All-Forgiving’, and, ‘Repent to Him because He *the Almighty* accepts repentance’. The elements that are mentioned indicate the omitted ones. This style is called ‘*ihtibak*’. One statement refers to both repentance and pleading for forgiveness. The difference between repentance and seeking forgiveness is that the latter is related to a sin committed by the person and for which he asks his Lord for forgiveness. As for repentance, it means to return to one’s Lord with the determination not to return to the acts of disobedience.

But what is the relationship between the conditional clause and the main clause in His saying: ‘When Allah’s Help [leading to victory] comes and He opens up [the gates of Mecca for] you [O Prophet Muhammad], and when you see people embracing Allah’s Religion in crowds, exalt and praise your Lord and plead to Him for Forgiveness: He is always ready to accept repentance’ (*an-Nasr*: 1-3)? The entire chapter consists of a conditional clause and its result. When Allah’s Help leading to victory comes and He

opens up the gates of Mecca for you, O Prophet Muhammad, and you see people embracing Allah's Religion in crowds, then exalt and praise your Lord. This is because the believer recognizes Allah's Favours and Attributes blessings to Him *Glorified is He Alone*, not to himself. A person is actually like a farmer who brings the grains, puts them in the soil and irrigates them—all of these elements are created by Allah. Then, he takes care of the plants with his effort, firmly believing that they were granted to him by Allah; he does not forget the One Who subjected all these elements to him. When he proceeds to work, he says, 'In the Name of Allah'. This entails that he does not depend on his power or knowledge, but rather on Allah's Omnipotence which subjected these elements to him.

This is the believer's way concerning his activities in life. Beware of attributing any success to yourself, your power and skills; rather, you should thank Allah and praise Him for granting you that success. When one appreciates the fruit of his work, he should say, 'It is as Allah has pleased, there is no power save with Allah'. In this way, the believer is connected to his Lord at the beginning and at the end of the work. That is why it is narrated that Prophet Muhammad said, 'Every action that is not started by saying, "In the Name of Allah", is cut off' <sup>(1)</sup>. It means that that action will be devoid of any blessing. As for the one who takes pride in his power, skill and knowledge, he is like Qarun, who Allah states saying: 'I have been given this only on account of the knowledge I have...' (*al-Qasas*: 78).

Allah *the Almighty* refers to these matters in the chapter in question, commanding Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to remember his Lord by praising and exalting Him, and to ask Him *the Almighty* for forgiveness when he sees the fruit of being granted success, victory and the opening of the city gates. The human soul cannot guarantee that it will not be inflicted with heedlessness and bad thoughts that entail seeking forgiveness. This is the case with Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* when he was deceived by the large number of the Muslim army at the battle of uhud and said, 'We will not be

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(1) While discussing this Hadith, Ahmad ibn Hanbal said that one of the narrators is a very weak narrator. In one narration, the chain of narrators is interrupted, and a Hadith with an interrupted chain is one of the categories of weak Hadiths. But the meaning of the Hadith is acceptable and applicable. See <https://islamqa.info/en/146079>.

defeated today due to our small number'. However, they suffered a defeat at the hands of the disbelievers.

That is, Allah's saying: 'Exalt and praise your Lord...' (*an-Nasr*: 3) means to elevate Him *Glorified is He* as He is too great to have any peer. He is the real Doer of all actions. One's role is to be a causal factor by which the actions are brought about. For example, if a soldier said, 'I killed so-and-so', we find that he did not do that in reality because it is the sword, for example, that killed that person. The soldier attributed this action to himself because the sword was the instrument he used to carry out the action. Likewise, the human being is like an instrument controlled by Allah *the Almighty*. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'It is not you who slew them, but it was Allah Who slew them, and you did not strike when you struck (the enemy), but it was Allah Who struck...' (*al-Anfal*: 17), and: 'Fight them, Allah will punish them with your hands ...' (*at-Tawba*: 14).

To sum up, the meaning of the verse is that we should seek Allah's Forgiveness for evil thoughts, like thinking we have a role to play in any action. With regards to Prophet Muhammad, the meaning could be that he should seek His Forgiveness due to the thought that might have come to him before liberating Mecca concerning the delay of the victory while the believers were on the right path. Likewise, 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Why should we put a blot upon our religion?' This was an objection to the Divine Way. That is why Abu Bakr said to him, 'You should follow him (Prophet Muhammad) 'Umar because he is Allah's Messenger'. Seeking forgiveness does not necessarily entail committing sins for which one seeks Allah's pardon. It is required for the like of these thoughts, as in the case mentioned in His saying: '...that even the Messenger [Muhammad] and those who believed with him cried, "When will the help of Allah come?"...' (*al-Baqara*: 214) This statement indicates that their souls had become straitened and they wanted victory to come soon. Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Until when the Messengers despaired [of their people] and realized that they had been dismissed as liars...' (*Yusuf*: 110). They should seek Allah's Forgiveness for such thoughts.

Another possible interpretation is that seeking forgiveness is meant to elevate the rank of Prophet Muhammad. There is a verse in the Quran that

refers to this elevation in ranks of faith, which is His saying: 'On those who believe and do good there is no blame for what they eat when they are careful (of their duty) and believe and do good deeds, then (*thumma*) they are careful (of their duty) and believe, then (*thumma*) they are careful (of their duty) and do good (to others)...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 93). Using the conjunction '*thumma*' (then) refers to an elevation from one rank to another. It is as if the believer is always elevating in the ranks of faith; whenever he reaches one rank, he looks forward to another, considering the previous one a shortcoming and a sin. This means seeking forgiveness in the verse refers to elevating ranks, as the good deeds of the righteous people are considered the misdeeds of the people who draw close to Allah *the Almighty*.

There is a very important point which we can learn from this verse; if Allah *the Almighty* directs an address to Prophet Muhammad, but it is not logically acceptable for it to be directed to him *peace and blessings be upon him* it means it is directed to the believers, as in His saying: 'O Prophet [Muhammad]! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah and do not comply with (the wishes of) the unbelievers and the hypocrites; surely Allah is All Knowing, All-Wise. And follow what is revealed to you from your Lord; surely Allah is Aware of what you (people) do' (*al-Ahzab*: 1-2). The Quran gives us principles and rulings in a form of an address to Prophet Muhammad who conveys the Message on behalf of Allah. If the address were only directed to him, the previous verse will have been concluded with Allah's saying, 'of what you (O Prophet) do', using the singular form of the verb, and not with His saying: '...Allah is Aware of what you (people) do' (*al-Ahzab*: 2), using the plural form.

This is the apparent meaning of the chapter of *An-Nasr* that all the readers of the Quran can easily understand. However, there is a hidden meaning for this chapter to which its words implicitly allude. The deduction of that meaning needs deep reflection; in fact Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Do they not then meditate on the Quran?' (*an-Nisa*': 82) Meditation entails delving into the apparent words to attain new meanings, instead of focusing only on the apparent ones. One should care fully reflect on the verses from all angles to deduce their hidden meanings. In this regard, Ibn Masu'd Allah *be pleased with him*

said, ‘Ponder deeply on the Quran to extract its meanings’.<sup>(1)</sup> This means that we should reflect on its different styles to be fully able to derive new meanings, just as we extract treasures from the earth.

In this connection, Imam Al-Bukhari recorded that Ibn ‘Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* and his father, said, ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab used to make me sit with the elderly men who fought in the Battle of Badr. Some of them were uncomfortable with that (as he, that is Ibn ‘Abbas, was young at the time) and they said to ‘Umar, “Why do you bring this boy to sit with us while he is like our sons?” One day, ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* called me and made me sit in the gathering of those people; and I think that he called me just to teach them. ‘Umar then asked them, “What do you say about the interpretation of the saying of Allah: ‘When Allah’s Help [leading to victory] comes and He opens up [the gates of Mecca for] you [O Prophet Muhammad]’ (*an-Nasr*: 1). Some of them said, “We are ordered to praise Allah and ask His Forgiveness when His Help and Conquest come to us”. Some others kept quiet and did not say anything. On that, ‘Umar asked me, “Do you say the same, O Ibn ‘Abbas?” I replied, “No”. He asked, “What do you say then?” I replied, “That is the sign of the death of Allah’s Messenger (Muhammad) of which Allah informed him. Allah said: ‘When Allah’s Help [leading to victory] comes and He opens up [the gates of Mecca for] you [O Prophet Muhammad]’ (*an-Nasr*: 1). The victory and the opening of the gates of Mecca indicate the end of Prophet Muhammad’s mission and the completion of the religion. Nothing remains for him except going to the Hereafter, which is better for him than this worldly life”. With that ‘Umar said, “I do not know anything about it other than what you have said”’.<sup>(2)</sup>

This is what really happened. When this chapter was revealed, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* summoned Fatima *Allah be pleased with her*. He secretly told her something that made her weep and then something else that made her laugh. Afterwards, Umm Salama said, ‘When Prophet Muhammad died, I asked Fatima about what he had told her secretly. She said, “He told me that Allah’s saying: ‘When Allah’s Help [leading to victory]

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(1) See *At-Tabarani, Al-Mu‘jam Al-Kabir*, p. 8666; and *Ahmad, Az-Zuhd*, 229/854.

(2) See *Al-Maturidi, Ta‘wilat Ahl As-Sunna*, 1/210.

comes and He opens up [the gates of Mecca for] you [O Prophet Muhammed]' (*an-Nasr*: 1) declares the end of his lifetime, so I wept. Then he told me that from among his family, I will be the first to join him, so I laughed".<sup>(1)</sup> We understand from Fatima's laughter that death is not something evil, as we wrongly think. It does not make us non-existent, but rather, it is the gate to an eternal, greater life. Once the slave dies, he meets the people he loved and to whom he was close. Moreover, he finds the introductory recompense of being shown his reward in the grave until the Day of Judgment takes place when he will receive his actual, everlasting reward.

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(1) A'isha *Allah be pleased with her* said, 'During his last illness, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called his daughter Fatima and told her a secret because of which she started weeping. Then he called her and told her another secret, and she started laughing. When I asked her about that, she replied, "Prophet Muhammad told me that he will die as he was fatally ill, and so I wept. But then he secretly told me that from among his family, I will be the first to join him, and so I laughed". See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 4433; Ibn Hibban, Sahih, Hadith no. 6954; and Al-Baghawi, Sharh As-Sunnan, Hadith no. 3959.*



the chapter of

***al-Masad***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Masad* <sup>(1)</sup>:

تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ ۝ مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ ۝

**May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined! May he be ruined too! [1] Neither his wealth nor his gains will help him [2]**  
**(The Quran, *al-Masad*: 1-2)**

The Quran continues to penetrate the veil of the future. It talks in the chapter of *Al-Kawthar* about *Al-Kawthar* that Allah (God)<sup>(2)</sup> *the Almighty* has given to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It is concluded by declaring that the one who hates him, that is Prophet Muhammad, is cut off. After this, it tells us about the victory that was granted to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* in the worldly life: ‘When Allah’s Help [leading to victory] comes and He opens up [the gates of Mecca for] you [O Prophet Muhammad]’ (*an-Nasr*: 1).

It is expected that the Quran then gives us another example of the one who hates Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The example

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(1) The chapter of *Al-Masad*, counting 5 verses and 29 words, is number 111 in the order of the *Mushaf* (the written copy of the Quran). It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *al-Muddaththir* and before that of *At-Takwir*. See As-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan Fi ‘Ulum Al-Quran*. 1/24.

(2) The Islamic concept of ‘Allah’ is not the same as the Christian and Jewish concept of ‘God’. But the word ‘Allah’ does not refer to a tribal god or the God of only Muslims; it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use ‘Allah’ rather than ‘God’ as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.

that was chosen from among those who expressed their absolute hatred for Prophet Muhammad and his Call this time was one of his kinsfolk and family. This clearly indicates that the religious relationships are not based on kinship and genealogical relations. The religion cannot be established through nationalism and tribal loyalty. Having sonship and kinship relationships with the Prophets and Messengers depends on believing in their Call, as the stories of the son of Nuh (Noah), the wife of Lut (Lot) and the wife of Pharaoh definitively proved. Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Salman belongs to us, the household of the Prophet'.<sup>(1)</sup>

Therefore, the Quran chooses Abu Lahab, Prophet Muhammad's uncle, to be an example of those who hate him *peace and blessings be upon him* and his Call. The verses revealed about him, that is Abu Lahab, became an ever-lasting part of the Quran that the people recite day and night and will continue to recite until the coming of the Day of Judgment. These verses constitute a promise of punishment and perdition for him.

The Quran penetrates the veil of the future when it gives the news about Abu Lahab's ultimate fate in the Hereafter while he was still alive in the worldly life. It gives this prophecy about him while he was in the stage of free choice and was able to repent from his stubborn disbelief.

Informing about future events could be related to a result of power or knowledge. But what is the difference between these two? A result of power is manifested in the case when one controls another one's food because he imprisoned him somewhere and gave him only one kind of food, for example. In actuality, it is through this power and domination over that imprisoned person that he can say that he will not eat except that kind of food tomorrow. This is an example of a result of power.

A result of knowledge, on the other hand, is manifested in the case when one leaves a person to freely eat any kind of food but knows for sure what he will eat, saying, 'He will eat such-and-such tomorrow'. This prophecy is based on knowledge that he will not choose anything except that kind of food. The prophecy, based on knowledge, is related to the actions that the power

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(1) See At-Tabarani, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir*, Hadith no. 6040; and Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, Hadith no. 6539 and 6541.

does not compel someone to do. This knowledge penetrates the veil of the future and is only attributed to Allah *the Almighty*. This is the case in the story of Abu Lahab; the Quran penetrates the veil of the future, declaring that he and his wife will die in a state of disbelief and will eternally burn in the flaming fire of Hell.

It is important here to note that Abu Lahab was one of many opponents of the Call at that time. Although most of them later believed and became good Muslims, he remained a disbeliever and died in such a state. Some of these opponents, like ‘Umar ibn Al-Kattab, Khalid ibn Al-Walid and ‘Amr ibn Al-‘As, became Muslim leaders when their hearts inclined to Islam and declared their Belief in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*.

But why does the Quran specifically give the aforementioned prophecy about Abu Lahab while he was only one of these many opponents?! Although he heard and understood that prophecy, he kept on disbelieving and was not deterred against disbelief. Had he pronounced the two Testimonies of faith or hypocritically embraced Islam, he will have put Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* in a difficult situation and accused the Quran of telling lies. However, this prophecy is based on Allah’s Omniscience and the absolutism of His Power and Knowledge that penetrate all veils. Consequently, Allah *Glorified is He* informed us about the ultimate fate of Abu Lahab and his wife apart from the rest of the people.

The books of Prophet Muhammad’s biography relate that Abu Lahab opposed him from the very beginning of the Call when Allah *the Almighty* commanded the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: ‘And warn your nearest kinsmen’ (*ash-Shu‘ara’*: 214). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ascended As-Safa and called out, ‘O people! Come at once!’ Consequently, the Quraysh gathered before him. He said, ‘Do you think that if I informed you that the enemy was preparing to attack you in the evening or in the morning, will you believe me?’ They said, ‘Yes. You have never told us lies’. He said, ‘Then, I am a warner for you of the coming of a severe punishment’. To this Abu Lahab replied, ‘Is it for this that you gathered us? May you perish?’<sup>(1)</sup> Due to this statement, the chapter in question was revealed in reference to him.

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas in Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 4770 and 4971; and also Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 355/208.*

Moreover, Abu Lahab used to track Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* whenever he presented himself to the Arab tribes to call them to believe in Allah's Religion. He, that is Abu Lahab, used to belie the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* before these tribes. In this regard, Rabi'a ibn 'Ubaid said, 'I was a young man with my father when I saw Prophet Muhammad presenting Islam to the tribes while he was being tracked by a tall, handsome man with a forelock. Prophet Muhammad used to stop to talk to the tribe, saying, "O tribe of so-and-so, I am Allah's Messenger to you all. I command you to worship Allah and not to associate anyone with Him. I want you to support and protect me, as you protect yourself, in order that I deliver what I was sent with to you". When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ended his statement, the man tracking him used to say, "O tribe of so-and-so, this man came to make you abandon your worship of al-Lat and al-'Uzza and your allies from the jinn from Banu Malik ibn Aqish. He wants you to follow his innovation and errors, do not listen to or obey him". I asked my father, "Who is that man?" he said, 'He is his [Prophet Muhammad's] uncle'".

By this we see that Abu Lahab exceeded all the limits in his disbelief; he was not satisfied with only his disbelief and that of his wife, rather, he barred the people from following Allah's Religion and opposed the Call of Prophet Muhammad. When the believers were boycotted and Banu Hashim was besieged in Shai'b Abu Taleb, no one belonging to Banu Hashim supported the boycott except Abu Lahab, who pledged to stand on the side of Quraysh in their boycott and blockade of Banu Hashim.

The chapter of *al-Masad* handles this situation and gives the aforementioned prophecy about Abu Lahab and his wife, stating: 'May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined! May he too be ruined!' (*al-Masad*: 1) The Arabic word '*tabb*', which the word '*tabbat*' (to be ruined) comes from, refers to ruin, destruction and perdition. The 'hands' here indicate the whole body because most of the actions are done with the hands. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: 'This is because of the [unrighteous deeds] which your own hands have sent before you...' (*Al-Imran*: 182).

In the chapter under discussion, Allah *Glorified is He* rebuts Abu Lahab's supplication to ruin Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. If Abu

Lahab had been able to ruin the Messenger, he will have done this. He only harbours hatred for the Truth and can do nothing but supplicate. Such a supplication indicates that he can neither harm Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* nor ruin him. Amazingly, he, that is Abu Lahab, invokes Prophet Muhammad's Lord to ruin the Prophet. In fact, the truth overwhelms Abu Lahab and makes him contradict himself. It is a contradiction between careful consideration and whims; between reason and senselessness. Therefore, his supplication against Prophet Muhammad is regarded as lies, idle talk and meaningless speech.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined! May he too be ruined!' (*al-Masad*: 1), the Speaker is Allah Who is fully Able to execute His Prophecy. No one can repel His Decree or modify His Prophecy. Accordingly, the One Who has the Absolute Power to ruin and destruct is He Who says: 'May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined! May he too be ruined!' (*al-Masad*: 1) Allah *Glorified is He* has given that Prophecy and is fully Able to execute it. That is why this Prophecy has been recorded in the Quran whose recitation is an act of worship and which will continue to be recited until the Day of Judgment.

We should not understand 'the ruin' in the verse in question as a supplication against Abu Lahab. Abu Lahab considered it to be the case, but with regards to Allah, it is a prophecy and decree that will inevitably be executed. After all, a supplication may or may not be answered, but this decree is a reality as Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'May he too be ruined!' (*al-Masad*: 1) with the verb in the past tense to indicate its realisation, even in the worldly life.

Despite his prestigious position, high rank and power among his people in the worldly life, Abu Lahab suffered a humiliating death that was unexpected for even a man with the lowest rank in the Meccan community. It is documented that he suffered an infectious disease called Al-'Adsa that made the people feel repulsed by him and not approach him. He remained in that state for three days until he died. The people could not wrap him with a shroud, so they dug a hole for him and used sticks to push his body into it. Afterwards, they covered the hole with pebbles that they threw from a far distance. This humiliating way of burial affirms Allah's saying: 'May the

hands of Abu Lahab be ruined! May he too be ruined!' (*al-Masad*: 1) Thus, this Divine Decree was applicable in the worldly life before the Hereafter.<sup>(1)</sup>

In this connection, we should relate the story of 'Utba and 'Utayba, the two sons of Abu Lahab, who married Prophet Muhammad's two daughters, Ruqayya and Umm Kulthum, before the Prophet became a Messenger. Abu Lahab said to his sons, 'You do not belong to me if you do not divorce Muhammad's daughters'. Thereupon, 'Utba divorced Ruqayya, but 'Utayba said, 'I will not divorce her (Umm Kulthum) until I harm her'. He passed by Prophet Muhammad and said to him, 'I have divorced my wife', spitting in his direction. Thereupon, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* supplicated against him, saying, 'May one of Allah's dogs devour you'.<sup>(2)</sup>

When Abu Lahab and his son, 'Utayba, set out on a commercial journey to Ash-Sham, they wanted to sleep during the night. Abu Lahab knew the place they had chosen was a home for lions. Consequently, he feared the realization of Prophet Muhammad's supplication against his son. He said to the people, 'Help me to avert Muhammad's supplication'. So they surrounded his son to protect him. Despite that, a lion came and seized him from their midst, and Prophet Muhammad's supplication was truly fulfilled. Naturally, Allah's dog must be a lion, at least; if a simple object is attributed to Him *Glorified is He*, it becomes great.

With regards to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...neither his wealth nor his gains will help him' (*al-Masad*: 2), the ruin of Abu Lahab also extends to

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(1) See *At-Tha'labi, Al-Kashf Wa Al-Bayan*, 4/335; see also *Siraj Ad-Din Ad-Dimashqi, Al-Lubab Fi 'Uhum Al-Kitab*; and *Al-Alusi, Ruh Al-Ma'ani*, 10/534.

(2) 'Utayba ibn Abu Lahab divorced Umm Kulthum, Prophet Muhammad's daughter, and went to the Prophet, saying, 'I have disbelieved in your religion and divorced you daughter. There is no mutual love between us'. Then he attacked Prophet Muhammad and tore his shirt. Thereupon, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'I invoke Allah to dispatch a dog against him'. This Hadith is narrated by Al-Haythami who attributed it to At-Tabarani through a loose (*Mursal*) chain of narrators, saying, 'One of the narrators is Zuhayr ibn Al-A'la', who is a weak narrator'. It was also narrated by Al-Hakim on the authority of Abu 'Aqrab. He graded this Hadith as authentic, while Ibn Hajar graded it as good. See *Al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il An-Nubuwwa*, 2/338-229; *Al-Hakim, Al-Mustadrak*, 2/539; and Ibn Hajar, *Fath Al-Bari*, 4/39.



his wealth and gains. This is because they were the source of his haughtiness to the extent that he said, ‘By Allah, if what my nephew says is true, I will ransom myself with my wealth and children’. Hence, Allah *the Almighty* rebuts his statement by emphasizing that his wealth and children will neither avail him nor repel His Punishment.

Scholars hold two views about this verse. The first is that the wealth refers to the original property that man possesses or the inheritance which one gets after the death of particular members of his family. This is actually the origin from which the gains mainly stem, exactly like the trees that bear fruit or the animals that breed. The other view is that the gains here refer to his children, as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘The best (most pure) food that a man eats is that which he has earned himself, and his child (and his child's wealth) is part of his earning’.<sup>(1)</sup>

Other scholars opine that Abu Lahab had done a favour to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* before being selected as a Messenger and similarly he did a favour to Quraysh. He said, ‘My favour on Muhammad will help me if he defeated Quraysh. As for my favour on Quraysh, it will be beneficial if they defeat him’. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...neither his wealth nor his gains will help him’ (*al-Masad*: 2).

This decree concerning Abu Lahab was a future event in the worldly life, a present event and also a past one that we related. The people transmitted it according to what Allah *the Almighty* had informed them about that tyrannical disbeliever. Next, the verses direct our attention to the Divine Punishment prepared for this man in the Hereafter:

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(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of ‘Aisha Allah be pleased with her. See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 22, 24, 24957 and 25845; Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2137; and An-Nasa’i, Sunnan .

سَيَصْلَى نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ ۚ وَامْرَأَتُهُ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ ۚ  
فِي جِيدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّن مَّسَدٍ ۝

**He will burn in the Flaming Fire [3] and so will his  
wife, the firewood-carrier [4] with a palm-fibre rope  
around her neck [5] (The Quran, *al-Masad*: 3-5)**

These verses discuss unseen matters that will be seen only in the Hereafter. Allah *the Almighty* proves the truthfulness of these unseen matters using the tangible ones we see in the worldly life. With regards to the Hereafter, Allah also says: ‘...Is it not sufficient as regards your Lord that He is a Witness over all things?’ (Fussilat: 53) It is an adequate proof of the truthfulness of a report that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who conveys it.

The Arabic prefix of the letter ‘*sin*’ (will), which indicates the future and is used here before the verb ‘burn’, is employed in discussing the future events of the Hereafter: ‘He will burn in the Flaming Fire’ (*al-Masad*: 3), This event will remain a future one until the establishment of the Hour. Out of Allah’s Wisdom, He *the Almighty* mentions the perceivable, tangible matters first in order to constitute a proof of the unseen ones.

Then the context of the verses turns our attention to the wife of Abu Lahab, who is Arwa Bint Harb ibn 'Umayya, the sister of Abu Sufyan. She held a high rank among her people and played a role in confronting the Islamic Call and harming Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. She did not depend in standing against Prophet Muhammad and his Call just on the efforts of her husband and brother, who were two of the dignitaries. She did not want Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to take their position, and therefore harboured envy and grudge against him. For this reason, after the verses tell us about the fate of Abu Lahab, they tell us about the fate of his wife who took part in harming Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* stating: ‘...and so will his wife, the firewood-carrier, with a tightly twisted rope of palm-fiber around her neck’ (*al-Masad*: 4-5).

Scholars interpret this verse to literally mean that Abu Lahab’s wife used to carry firewood and throw it in Prophet Muhammad’s way to hurt him. That firewood must have been a thorny one that she had selected to harm him *peace*

and blessings be upon him. It is important to know that Abu Lahab was Prophet Muhammad's neighbour.

Another possible interpretation is that the 'firewood' metaphorically refers to calumny. This is because Arwa used to go about spreading calumnies among the people to rouse hostilities between them. That was the 'firewood' by which she burned herself and the people around her. She was also infamous for being envious. In fact, calumny and envy are two of the most serious causes of provoking hostility among the people. The literal and the metaphorical meaning of 'firewood-carrier' are both acceptable.

With regards to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...with a tightly twisted rope of palm-fiber around her neck (*jeed*)' (*al-Masad*: 5), the Arabic word '*jeed*' refers to the neck and the place of the necklace. The Arabs use this word to praise others and describe beauty, as a poet once said,

Her neck (*jeed*) is of a moderate height

It is full of jewelry and necklaces

As for the neck of Abu Lahab's wife, it will be decorated with a rope of palm-fiber; it is a rough fiber which will be tied firmly around her neck. The fiber of the palm-tree is naturally rough and it will be tightly woven to become a rope tied around the neck. You should ponder on that humiliating and degrading fate after the great honour and high rank she held among her people. It is as if her punishment suits her crime; the rope with which she used to tie a pack of firewood will be tied tightly around her neck.

Moreover, there is a harmonious relationship between the meanings and the words used to describe them. This actually enhances the portrayal of the fate of these two examples of Prophet Muhammad's enemies. For example, the word '*lahab*' (flame) corresponds to the name 'Abu Lahab', which has become the name of 'Abd Al-'Uzza because he had a red face that looked like a flaming fire. His punishment was not different from that portrayal: 'He will burn in the Flaming Fire' (*al-Masad*: 3). This is not a coincidence; it is rather preciseness in the portrayal of the meaning, for it is Allah *the Almighty* Who is speaking.

Likewise, the Quran says about the firewood-carrier's punishment: '...with a tightly twisted rope of palm-fiber around her neck' (*al-Masad*: 5).

The word '*tabb*' (perish) means cutting off with force, like the strength and might by which the rope of the palm-fiber is woven. Thus, the sentences and the words are miraculously, eloquently, rhetorically and harmoniously related to the meaning they convey. Glorified is the One to Whom these words belong. We seek refuge in Him *Glorified is He* from His punishment, torment and the evil of His slaves!

the chapter of

***al-Ikhlas***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Ikhlās* <sup>(1)</sup>:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ﴿١﴾ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ﴿٢﴾  
لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ﴿٣﴾ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ﴿٤﴾

**Say, ‘He is God the One [1] God the eternal [2]  
He begot no one nor was He begotten [3] No one is  
comparable to Him’ [4] (The Quran, *al-Ikhlās*: 1-4)**

We have noticed that the chapters of the Quran are harmoniously related to each other; every chapter is coherently related to the one following it. For example, the chapter of *Al-Ma‘un* gives us an example of withholding common kindness: ‘...those who [want nothing but] to be seen and forbid common kindnesses’ (*al-Ma‘un*: 6-7). After it, the chapter of *Al-Kawthar* gives us an example of unlimited giving: ‘We have given *Al-Kawthar* to you [O Prophet Muhammad]’ (*al-Kafirun*: 1). It concludes by mentioning the punishment of the one who hates Prophet Muhammad, stating: ‘It is the one who hates you who has been cut off’ (*al-Kafirun*: 3).

The word *al-Kawthar* gathers all the aspect of goodness and proves that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who was given *Al-Kawthar*, has come with a Way of Guidance from Allah *the Almighty*. This is because *Al-Kawthar* is an unfailing bestowal in both the worldly life and the Hereafter. It

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(1) The chapter of *Al-Ikhlās*, counting 4 verses, is number 112 in the order of the *Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *An-Nas* and before that of *An-Najm*. It has about 20 different names and it was narrated that its recitation equals the recitation of one-third of the Quran.

can also carry the meanings of a river in paradise, prophethood, wisdom, the Quran, Belief and Islam. The river of paradise is only a part of *Al-Kawthar*.

As the context of the chapter of *Al-Kawthar* is about the Way of Guidance and the one who hates Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* it is expected that the Quran then makes a distinction between the two camps: the believing one that supports Prophet Muhammad and the disbelieving one that hates him *peace and blessings be upon him* and the Divine Way of Guidance. For this reason, the chapter of *Al-Kafirun* follows *Al-Kawthar* to make such distinction and sever the relations between the two groups. The differences between them cannot be reconciled, either in the present or in the future. The chapter concludes with Allah's saying: 'You have your religion and I have mine' (*an-Nasr*: 6). This verse means that Prophet Muhammad and his Companions are on one side, following one religion, and those who hate him and disbelieve in his Call are on another side, following their false religion.

This clearly shows that this condition of the force of disbelief confronting that of Belief will not continue, for the Truth will triumph and defeat falsehood. That is why the chapter of *An-Nasr* followed *Al-Kafirun* to define and highlight the end of falsehood: 'When Allah's Help [leading to victory] comes and He opens up [the gates of Mecca for] your [O Prophet Muhammad]' (*an-Nasr*: 1). After this, the chapter of *Al-Masad* gives us an example of ruin that suits Allah's saying: 'It is the one who hates you who has been cut off' (*al-Kafirun*: 3). Likewise, the victory in His saying: 'When Allah's Help [leading victory] comes and He opens up [the gates of Mecca for] you [O Prophet Muhammad]' (*an-Nasr*: 1) is in keeping with His saying: 'We have given *Al-Kawthar* to you [O Prophet Muhammad]' (*al-Kafirun*: 1).

Furthermore, we notice that the chapter of *al-Kafirun*, which was concluded with His saying: 'You have your religion and I have mine' (*an-Nasr*: 6) is associated with the chapter of *al-Ikhlās*, though it does not follow it directly. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to recite the chapter of *Al-Kafirun* in the first unit and *al-Ikhlās* in the second unit of the two recommended units of prayer during the time of *Al-Fajr*;<sup>(1)</sup> in the two

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(1) *A Hadith to that effect is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 98/726; Abu 'Uwana, Mustakhraj, Hadith no. 2163; and Al-Hakim, Al-Mustadrak, Hadith no. 1645.*



recommended units of prayer after the Sunset Prayer; in the Sunset Prayer on Friday night;<sup>(1)</sup> and in the Dawn Prayer of the traveler. This is because these two chapters represent true, pure monotheism by negating Divinity from anyone other than Allah *the Almighty* and ascribing it to Him *Glorified is He Alone*. His saying: ‘I do not worship what you worship’ (*al-Kafirun*: 1) negates the Divinity of any other false deity; and His saying: ‘Say, “He is Allah, the One”’ (*al-Ikhlās*: 1) affirms Allah’s Divinity.

Monotheism is all about negation and affirmation. The statement of monotheism contains negation in the phrase ‘there is no god’, and an affirmation in the phrase ‘but Allah’. Affirmation only comes after negation, as the legal maxim states that warding off harm takes precedence over bringing about benefit. If we reflect on the phenomenon of negation and affirmation or matters being positive and negative, we find it common throughout the physical world. For example, the light powered by electricity needs positive and negative elements. Likewise, all the atoms in existence do not fulfil their function except through this phenomenon.

The statement of monotheism ‘there is no god but Allah’ contains many secrets and spiritual mysteries that can be uncovered by the people who are knowledgeable of Allah. One of them used to invoke Allah to remain alive until he finishes saying the statement of monotheism, out of fear of dying after pronouncing the phrase ‘there is no god’. This shows how careful they were about that statement and also their fear of sudden death. One of them said, ‘The worship starts with saying that there is no god but Allah’. This is the general starting point for all people. After being elevated in the ranks of Belief, one will only say, ‘but Allah’, as in His saying: ‘...Say, “Allah”, then leave them sporting in their vain discourses’ (*al-An‘am*: 91). This means that the one who reaches a lofty rank in Belief does not need to negate the Divinity of any other god. This is because he cannot imagine at all that there is a partner with Him, so why should he say, ‘There is no god but Allah’? This is true in the sense that it is wrong to negate a flaw about someone that

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(1) *A Hadith to that effect is narrated on the authority of Jabir ibn Samura Allah be pleased with him. See Ibn Hibban, Sahih, Hadith no. 1841; Al-Bayhaqi, As-Sunnan As-Sughra, Hadith no. 640; and Al-Baghawi, Sharh As-Sunna, 3/81.*

can never have such an error. For example, it is wrong to say about a pious person, 'He does not drink wine', for although the action is negated, this statement alludes that he may drink it.

The chapter of *Al-Masad* is placed between *Al-Kafirun* and *Al-Ikhlās* because it is related to the chapter of *al-Ikhlās*, and there is also another harmonious relationship between them in Allah's saying: 'May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined! May he too be ruined!' (*al-Masad*: 1). Linguistically, this verse constitutes a supplication. A supplicant naturally invokes the one who can answer his supplication. This is the case with human beings. As for Allah *the Almighty* such expressions are not supplications, but rather statements from Him Who taught us how to invoke Him *Glorified is He*. As Allah *the Almighty* decreed to ruin Abu Lahab, this will inevitably come to pass; He says: '...May he too be ruined!' (*al-Masad*: 1) This affirms that the Decree has been executed. Moreover, the chapter of *Al-Ikhlās* follows *Al-Masad* to emphasise this fact: 'Say, "He is Allah, the One"' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1). The One Who decreed this and made that declaration has no partner and no one can repel His Decree or dispute over it. That is, the chapter of *Al-Ikhlās* affirms that the decree concerning Abu Lahab is irrevocable.

The chapter of *Al-Ikhlās* has many honours, one of which is the multiplicity of its names, like *Al-Ikhlās* (Sincerity), *Al-Iman* (Belief), *Bara'a* (Freedom), *At-Tawhid* (Monotheism), *At-Tafrīd* (Unique), *Al-Mubara'a* (Proclamation of Innocence), *Al-Mu'arrifa* (the Knowledge of Allah), *Al-Asas* (the Essence and Foundation), *Al-Mu'awwidha* (the chapter of Refuge), *Al-Jamal* (Beauty), *An-Naja* (Salvation), *Al-Wilaya* (Authority and Protection), *At-Tajrid* (Being Free from Anything Else), *An-Nisba* (Association or Connection with Allah) and *Nur Al-Quran* (the Light of the Quran). Each of these names indicates a special meaning.<sup>(1)</sup>

Purity and sincerity indicate the existence of matters that are intermingled, and as a result each one should be separated from the others. That is to say

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(1) It was called *Al-Asas* (the Essence or Foundation) because it includes the idea of monotheism and the essence of the religion. It is called *Al-Ikhlās* (Purity) because it describes Divinity in a pure way, or because its reciter declares his Belief in monotheism. It is called *Mu'arrifa* (Knowledge) because one's knowledge of Allah will not be perfect without knowing this chapter. It is called *Al-Muqashqashah* (the Cure) because it cures the heart from hypocrisy.

that the matter of Divinity has incorporated even false deities, so the chapter of *Al-Ikhlās* (Purity) came to purify this matter and to attribute it only to Allah, the true God. When one is able to distinguish the true God, he can also make a distinction between good and evil, and Truth and falsehood. Accordingly, he purifies his conscious from all the false deities in order to be preoccupied with only the true Deity.

Monotheism saves the human being from the confusion of polytheism that does not benefit him but rather causes him harm. This is because once a man associates a false deity with the true God, the latter will forsake him. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘I am the One Who is most free from a need for partners’.<sup>(1)</sup> And when one associates anything with Him, Allah *Glorified is He* leaves the polytheist to the false deity and deprives him of His Bounties.

Monotheism, purity and sincerity in worship guide man to a beneficial objective. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says in a Sacred Hadith, ‘Sincerity is one of the secrets I instilled in the hearts of those I love. Neither an Angel watches it to record it nor a sent Prophet’.<sup>(2)</sup> Sincerity purifies monotheism from even the illusion of the created causal factors. That is why the corruption of monotheism on the part of many people following a religion other than Islam stemmed mainly from being allured by some causal factors. They wrongly thought they have a power, yet they were heedless of the fact that these causal factors and their power were originally created by Allah *the Almighty*. Consequently, they were allured away from the Creator of the causal factors by the power of these factors.

It is as if the disbeliever is insincere in his worship of Allah *the Almighty* when he thinks that the causal factors are acting by themselves. He should have considered that they, that is the casual factors, are means of receiving bounties from Allah *the Almighty*. These bounties could have been given without these factors, as pursuing these factors to reach an objective could have been fruitless. Were these causal factors beneficial by themselves, this will have

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 46/2985; Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 4202; and Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 8301.*

(2) *See Ibn Al-Jawzi, Al-Musalsalat, 1/12; and Abu Al-Muhasin At-Tarabulsi, Al-Lu’lu’ Al-Marsu’, Hadith no. 240.*

meant that Allah *the Almighty* placed them in the universe to act by themselves. This idea is one of the flaws of philosophical research. This will have meant that Allah *the Almighty* practiced His Sovereignty in His Kingdom only once and then left the causal factors to work automatically. To rebut this view, we say, 'If that were true, the causal factors will not make any error because the result will be automatic, but we see that the causal factors do not necessarily guarantee the existence of their expected effects. Furthermore, the effects may be brought about without their causal factors. This is the case with the miracles that Allah *the Almighty* performed for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*'. Thus, the chapter of *Al-Ikhlās* clarifies the pure creed.

It is also called *Al-Asas* (the Essence and Foundation), for it is narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The seven Heavens and the seven earths were established on the basis of: "Say, 'He is Allah, the One'"' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1). This means that this statement is the essence upon which the heavens and the earth were constructed. How is that the case?! The scholars say that this fact is alluded to in His saying: 'If there had been in them (the heavens and earth) any gods besides Allah, they will both have certainly been in a state of disorder...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 22). As the heavens and the earth were not ruined, this conclusively proves that there is no god with Allah *the Almighty*. Had this creed been false, the heavens and the earth will not have been established. In this connection, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Surely, Allah sustains the heavens and the earth lest they cease [to function]; and if they should cease [to function], there is none who can sustain them after Him...' (*Fatir*: 41).

Scholars opine that His *Glorified is He* saying: 'If there had been in them (the heavens and earth) any gods besides Allah, they will both have certainly been in a state of disorder ...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 22) constitutes a proof for monotheism as the absence of disorder negates the existence of multiple deities. Allah *the Almighty* does not present this fact using Aristotelian logic; rather, Allah *Glorified is He* just mentions one issue and lets the listener deduce the conclusion himself, without Him explaining the matter in depth.

Allah's saying: 'If there had been in them (the heavens and earth) any gods besides Allah, they will both have certainly been in a state of disorder...'

(*al-Anbiya'*: 22) clearly indicates that He *the Almighty* is certain that everyone listening will affirm the absence of disorder. Allah *Glorified is He* mentions this issue leaving the listener to deduce the conclusion. The only reply the listener can say is, 'As the universe is precisely ordered and runs according to an accurate, unchanging calculation and system, then there is no disorder in it. Consequently, the multiplicity of deities is not possible due to the absence of disorder'.

Finally, we should say that the issue: 'If there had been in them (the heavens and earth) any gods besides Allah, they will both have certainly been in a state of disorder...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 22) may need further illustration to explain its proof clearly. In order to clarify this, we should mention that the philosophers and theologians have discussed the terms 'antithetical' and 'opposite'. The one who looks at these terms may think at first glance that they are synonymous. However, deep reflection on them shows that they are not, for each of them has a distinct meaning. The two antithetical matters are neither present nor absent at the same time. That is to say that only one of them must exist. For example, either motionlessness or motion can be attributed to any object, and thus they cannot be both attributed to one thing at the same time, calling it simultaneously moving and motionless. Moreover, they cannot be negated at the same time, calling a thing neither motionless nor moving. Thus, one of these descriptions must exist and when it is present, its antithetical must be absent.

As for two opposite objects, they cannot be present at the same time but may be both absent, just as whiteness and blackness. They, like the antithetical objects, cannot exist at the same time but they may be absent, unlike the antithetical ones. The white and black may be absent because the red, for example, exists. Thus, antithetical objects are related to the matters that have no third possibility, and opposite objects are about objects that have more than two choices.

We want to explain the proof of interdependent absence using the aforementioned theory to serve the interpretation of the chapter in question, *Al-Asas*. If there were multiple deities, they will either agree or disagree with each other. In the case of disagreement, one god may want to create something moving and another want it to be motionless. As we have said, 'An object

cannot be moving and motionless at the same time. Only one case must exist'. Only one of the two gods' opinions will prevail, for the antithetical wills cannot exist at the same time. But the one whose will has been overwhelmed cannot be a true god. The basic maxim is that the two antithetical objects can never exist together. As the will of one of them was overwhelmed, this affirms his disability and, therefore, negates his attribute of Divinity. On the other hand, if they agreed to divide the attributes, the powers and the different aspects of Divinity among themselves, this proves these presumptive gods' inability with regards to the aspect of Divinity they abandoned. Thus, the idea of polytheism is incorrect, whether the deities agree or disagree with each other.

The issue of proving the Oneness of Allah was the main concern of the religions, not the issue of His Existence. This is due to the fact that the human beings naturally believe in His Existence. That is why the Quran does not talk in length about proving Allah's Existence; Its main concern revolved around Allah's saying: 'Is there a god with Allah?' (*an-Naml*: 60) The disbelievers fully recognised Allah's Existence and His creation of everything, a fact which is clear in His saying: 'And if you should ask them who created them, they will certainly say, "Allah"...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 87), and: 'And if you ask them, "Who created the heavens and the earth, and subjected the sun and the moon [to the Creator's Law], they will certainly say, "Allah"...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 61). Thus, the Existence of a Creator for the universe is self-evident; that is why the Quran presents it in one statement, saying: 'Or were they created from nothing, or were they themselves the creators?' (*at-Tur*: 35)

As for calling the chapter in question '*Al-Iman*' (Belief), this is because Belief is the source of reassurance and peace, as all the derivatives of the root '*a*'- '*m*'- '*n*' signify reassurance and peace, like '*al-amn*' (safety), '*al-amana*' (honesty), '*al-amin*' (the honest) and '*al-mu'minin*' (the believers). Belief refers to the faith a heart has in something. After being reassured, the matter does not entail the realm of reason, research and discussion. This is because the heart had previously reflected on it, and then believed in it and became reassured about it.

For this reason, the chapter of *Al-Iman* refers to the peace and reassurance that one gets when he devotes his worship to the only true God Who

possesses the Power, Sovereignty and Ability to harm or benefit. Such a person does not think of worshipping false deities that neither harm nor benefit. Moreover, they cannot avail him against Allah *the Almighty* at all. One finds reassurance in believing in the One God that has no partner to oppose, Who is the Self-Sufficient that all the creatures need and to Whom the whole universe is fully subjected.

We have previously presented the issue of Belief and reassurance in the story of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘When Ibrahim (Abraham) said, “My Lord! Show me how You give life to the dead”, He said, “Why?! Do you not believe?” He [Ibrahim] said, “Yes, but that my heart may be at ease”...’ (*al-Baqara*: 260). The word ‘Yes’ indicates that Ibrahim *peace be upon him* has truly believed. Then he said, ‘...but that my heart may be at ease ...’ (*al-Baqara*: 260). Thus, what is required is the reassurance of the heart. But how does he affirm Belief and then ask for reassurance?! The scholars say that this is because the question is not about Allah’s Ability to resurrect the dead but rather ‘how’ He *the Almighty* resurrects them. Ibrahim *peace be upon him* did not say, ‘Do you give life to the dead?’ Rather, he said, ‘...show me how You give life to the dead...’ (*al-Baqara*: 260). As he asks about the way of doing that action, he must firmly believe in it. This is what is required from the believer, that is, firm Belief in Allah’s Absolute Ability to resurrect the dead. As for knowing the way of doing this, it is not required.

It is as if Allah’s saying: ‘...Why?! Do you not believe?’ and Ibrahim’s reply: ‘Yes’ (*al-Baqara*: 260) directs our attention to the fact that knowing the way how Allah’s Actions are done is not part of Belief, for this knowledge is confined to Allah *Glorified is He*. That is why the Lord *the Almighty* gave Ibrahim *peace be upon him* a practical answer, not just a verbal one, by giving life to the birds with Ibrahim *peace be upon him* actually taking part in this. In fact, he played the main part as it was he *peace be upon him* who cut the birds and then called them to come to him flying. This is the intended point of this lesson, for if it had been Allah Who called them, it will be a simple, normal matter. What is special is that it was Ibrahim who called them, that is, Allah *the Almighty* had given him the ability to do this.

Therefore, the required Belief is that which leads to peace and reassurance about a matter of Belief, like the Resurrection. It is not necessary, however, that the believer knows how this action is done. It is enough that such actions are attributed to Allah *the Almighty*. If our minds cannot imagine the ways of some actions of the created beings are performed, how can we imagine the way Allah *the Almighty* performs some Actions?!

For example, we do not perceive the way the sorcerer bewitches someone. Even the sorcerer himself who bewitches the people cannot explain that process. Therefore, if the ways some amazing human actions are performed are unknown, then how more so for the ways the Actions of Allah by which He *Glorified is He* practices His Sovereignty in the universe are performed?! As the human mind is unable to understand that way, the answer to Prophet Ibrahim was practical, not verbal.

When Belief exists and leads to the reassurance of the heart, the human being pursues the activities of life with all the energy that Allah *the Almighty* may give him. This is because life is changeable and full of opposite states: strength and weakness, richness and poverty, ability and disability, knowledge and ignorance, good and evil, happiness and sadness, and joyful and painful events. The believer should be supported by strong Belief that Allah *the Almighty* is the true God Who has full control over everything. All the creatures in the universe are the effects of Allah's Creative Power. He *the Almighty* is the Real Doer of everything and the One Who truly manages the affairs of the universe.

If such firm Belief does not exist in man's heart, he will not live a happy, stable life, and will be crushed by the calamitous events of life. However, if he considers these events as due to Allah's Predestination, he will fully recognise that they are carried out based on the Truth and also equality between all mankind, as He *the Almighty* regards them all as equals. The strong does not excel the weak and the rich does not excel the poor. The events of life, even what he may regard as evil, do not shake such a believer. This is because he believes that it is Allah *the Almighty* Who created him and caused these events to happen to him.

The Creator wants to reform His creation, not to corrupt it. The events that man sees as evil bear hidden aspects of goodness and wisdom. One



considers them evil while Allah *the Almighty* has planned for good to come from them. When one holds that Belief and leads his life accordingly, he has a peaceful soul and conscious. As he fears and hopes for the pleasure of no one but Allah *the Almighty* the events do not cause him to panic. Furthermore, the members of the society wherein this creed prevails live and work together efficiently and as equals; Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘So that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor exult over what comes to you...’ (*al-Hadid*: 23).

Such firm established Belief only exists after having knowledge about Allah’s Way of Guidance. As for the basic Belief in the Existence of Allah Himself Who created the universe and has all the Attributes of Perfection, such Belief necessarily precedes knowledge of Allah’s Path for us in life. After believing in Him as the Creator and the true Doer, one should learn His Way of Guidance that governs one’s way in life. Thus, the knowledge that follows the basic Belief in the Existence of Allah is that related to the Divine Way of Guidance. As for what precedes this basic Belief, it is the knowledge related to believing in the Existence of Allah. Indeed, one does not have Belief before he has knowledge. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Allah bears witness that there is no god but He, and (so do) the angels and those possessed of knowledge ...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 18). He *Glorified is He* does not mention those who believe as Belief does not affirm Allah’s Oneness except after the person has knowledge about this fact.

Some people say, ‘Belief precedes knowledge for we do not need knowledge to believe, but we need Belief to have knowledge about Him’. We say to such people that they are partly right and partly wrong. It is necessary to have deductive knowledge to reach the basic Belief in the Existence of Allah *the Almighty*. After believing in Him, He *Glorified is He* gives the believer some knowledge without the believer expending any effort on his part. This is because the ultimate level of knowledge which one reaches using his mind is none but the realisation of the apparent phenomena of the worldly life. As for the hidden secrets of the universe, he is not able to learn anything about them. One’s knowledge is confined to his experience in life. However, Allah *the Almighty* teaches the believer about matters beyond one’s perception and empirical sciences. Thus, one is in need for Belief in Allah to realise some of the hidden knowledge.

Furthermore, one needs Belief to know about the reward that Allah *the Almighty* preserves for him in the eternal life of the Hereafter. Indeed, who is able to accept the belief that the fleeting worldly life is the end of one's life? After all, one's lifetime is fleeting: some moments from birth to death. And how can the creatures that were made subservient to such a man be sometimes in a better state than him?! Clearly, one must believe in the existence of an eternal life and that the worldly life is just a fleeting one wherein he should strive for the eternal one. For these reasons, the chapter in question is called *al-Iman*.

As for the reason of calling the chapter of *al-Ikhlās* '*Bara'a*' (Freedom), this point has been made clear by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who said about it, 'It entails freedom from polytheism'.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus, it entails freedom from the fire; the two meanings are correlated. It is narrated that Abu Hurayra said, 'I came back (from a journey) with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and he heard a man reciting: "Say, 'He is Allah, the One'" (*al-Ikhlās*: 1). The Messenger of Allah then said, "It is guaranteed". We asked him, "What, O Messenger of Allah?" He said, "Paradise". He meant the reciter had been spared from the Fire only because he had purified himself from polytheism'.<sup>(2)</sup>

Furthermore, it is narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* once dispatched a group of soldiers. The Imam who led them in prayer always concluded his recitation with the chapter of *Al-Ikhlās*: 'Say, "He is Allah, the One"' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1). Upon their return to Medina, they mentioned this to Prophet Muhammad, who said, 'Ask him why he does this?' He was asked and he said, 'This chapter contains the Attributes of Allah, the Gracious, and I love to recite it'. Prophet Muhammad then told them, 'Tell him that Allah loves him'.<sup>(3)</sup> In another narration, it is narrated that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, 'Your love for it admitted you into paradise'.<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) *This Hadith was related in reference to the chapter of al-Kafirun.*

(2) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Malik, Muwatta', Hadith no.709/228; and Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 8011.*

(3) *A Hadith to that effect was narrated on the authority of 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no.7375; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 263/813.*

(4) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him. See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 12432 and 12512; Ad-Darimi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3478; Ibn Hibban, Sahih, Hadith no. 792; and Abu Ya'la Al-Mawsili, Musnad, Hadith no. 3336.*

Additionally, Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah Allah be pleased with him narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘The one who does the following three good actions will enter paradise from any door he wishes and marry who he wishes of the women with beautiful eyes in paradise: the one who forgives his killer, repays the unrecorded debt (that the owner of the money has no proof of it or witnesses) and reads: “Say, ‘He is Allah, the One’” (*al-Ikhlās*: 1) ten times after each prayer’. Abu Bakr, who was a merciful man, said to Prophet Muhammad, ‘Or one of these good deeds, O Messenger of Allah?’ He said, ‘Yes, or one of them’.<sup>(1)</sup> This means that the one who does only one of these three good deeds will receive the reward mentioned in the Hadith.

Besides, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was told about a man who always concluded his recitations in the prayer with the chapter of *al-Ikhlās*, he said, ‘By the One in Whose Hand my soul is! It is equivalent to one-third of the Quran’.<sup>(2)</sup>

Furthermore, it is narrated that U‘qba ibn ‘Amir said he met Prophet Muhammad and was the first one to offer greetings, taking him by the hand. He said to the Prophet, ‘O Messenger of Allah! What is the means to salvation?’ Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, ‘That you control your tongue, keep to your house, and weep over your sins’. ‘Uqba said that he met Prophet Muhammad once again and [this time] the Prophet was the first to offer greetings, taking ‘Uqba by the hand and saying, ‘O ‘Uqba, shall I tell you the best three chapters that have been revealed in the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms and the Glorious Quran?’ ‘Uqba said, ‘Of course, Messenger of Allah, may I be sacrificed for you!’ Prophet Muhammad said, ‘They are: “Say, ‘He is Allah, the One’” (*al-Ikhlās*: 1), and: “Say [O Prophet Muhammad], ‘I seek refuge with the Lord of the daybreak’” (*al-Falaq*: 1), and: “Say, ‘I seek refuge

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(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah Allah be pleased with him. See *At-Tabarani, Al-Mu‘jam Al-Awsat*, Hadith no. 3361; and *Abu Nu‘aim, Hilyat Al-Awliya’*, Hadith no. 6/243.

(2) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Sa‘id Al-Khudari Allah be pleased with him. See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih*, Hadith no. 6634 and 7374; *Ahmad, Musnad*, Hadith no. 11306 and 11392; *Ibn Hibban, Sahih*, Hadith no. 791; and *Al-Bayhaqi, Shu‘ab Al-Iman*, Hadith no. 2301.

with the Lord of people” (an-Nas: 1), reciting all of them completely’. He then told ‘Uqba, ‘O ‘Uqba, do not sleep any night without reciting them’. ‘Uqba related that by Allah, he did not forget them since the time Prophet Muhammad commanded him not to forget to recite them before sleeping at night. Then he met Prophet Muhammad and was the first to offer greetings, taking him by the hand. ‘Uqba said, ‘O Messenger of Allah! What are the best deeds?’ He told him, ‘Strengthening the ties of kinship, giving those who withheld from you and forgiving the one who wronged you’. <sup>(1)</sup>

Some of the names of the chapter in question are *At-Tajrid*, *At-Tawhid* and *At-Tafrid*. All these words bear one meaning that is monotheism. *At-Tajrid* means to purify the essence of something from what may mix with it. We have stated that associating deities with Allah corrupts monotheism, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘I am the One Who is the most free of the need for partners’. Some people mistakenly think that there are other deities with Allah *Glorified is He*. However, the true God is One and has no partner to seek help from him. Let the one who associates partners with Him go to that partner. *At-Tawhid* and *At-Tafrid*, like *At-Tajrid*, means to clear something from the impurities that may mix with it.

However, the word *Tawhid* (Oneness) adds a new meaning. For example, when one refers to ‘*Wahat Al-Qawl*’ (one word), this means that he chose one from many opinions, not that he formed one opinion from many views. Similarly, this chapter is like one considering many partners and then choosing only one. That is why the chapter of *al-Ikhlās* rebuts the creed of trinity (the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost) which merges these persons and makes them one.

In reality, monotheism does not mean that the monotheist forms one entity from many partners. Rather, it means to bear witness that Allah is One. However, unifying Allah is not the result of those who believe in Allah’s Oneness, because Allah *the Almighty* is One, whether the people believed Him as being One or not. This is also because Allah *Glorified is He* is One, whether

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(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of ‘Uqba ibn ‘Amir Allah be pleased with him. See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 17334; and At-Tabarani, Al-Mu‘jam Al-Kabir, Hadith no. 742.*

the person attested to this fact or not. Therefore, when one pronounces the testimony of Belief, he speaks the truth. This is because Allah *the Almighty* was not many beings that became one entity; rather, He is One.

Allah *Glorified is He* was the first to mention this fact saying: ‘Allah bears witness that there is no god but He ...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 18). This is a testimony of His Essence of Himself, whether the human being attested to that or not. Then Allah says: ‘... and (so do) the angels and those possessed of knowledge’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 18). The angels attested to His Oneness as a testimony of a witness who has seen with his eyes, and the people of knowledge attested according to their knowledge of Allah *the Almighty*.

It is remarkable that the verse does not mention the people who believe but rather the people who have knowledge. This is due to the fact that Belief stems from knowledge; after perceiving it one can believe. As for those who say, ‘I believe I know Allah’, we say to them that there is a difference between knowing Allah and to know about Him. Knowing Allah *the Almighty* is related to His Essence. As for knowing about Him, this is related to His Way of Guidance which was conveyed by Prophet Muhammad. Thus, faith lies between two stages of knowledge: to know that He is the One God, which makes you believe in Him, and as a result, receive knowledge about His Way of Guidance. With regards to the discussion about whether Belief preceded Islam or vice versa, we say that this is an unnecessary disagreement because we have to consider different aspects for this question. In actuality, some sort of knowledge is perceived before having Belief and another is perceived after it.

Knowledge is the proof of Belief because the former is a mental process of research and deduction. This process brings about a firm creed that settles in the conscious and the heart and is then never subjected again to disputation. It becomes unquestionable. Such a creed is the Belief in which the soul finds peace. Thus, the first knowledge is related to finding the proofs of Allah’s Oneness that lead to believe in Him *Glorified is He* as the only God. At this point, the role of the mind ends with regards to the creed; it must submit to Allah’s saying and not question the revelation that comes through a Messenger. Its role will be used in documenting the sacred texts and making sure they have come from Allah *the Almighty*. But if one becomes certain that a

given text has come from Him *the Almighty* he has to accept it without any discussion or hesitation. The sacred texts should be the primary source of his knowledge. Afterwards, the mind may discuss some religious matters that are open to discussion. The sound mind that does not follow whims can reach the rationales and the objectives of the religious laws by itself.

This was the case with ‘Umar ibn Al-Kattab *Allah be pleased with him*. There were times when the Quran descended on Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as a confirmation and a support for ‘Umar’s opinion. If one asks, ‘Why were there no times when the Quran was revealed to affirm Prophet Muhammad’s opinions, although he is closer to Allah?’ We say that Allah *the Almighty* wanted to show us that the sound mind whose nature is pure and which thinks clearly can come to a conclusion that agrees with the Way of Guidance itself.

The knowledge we derive from the Way of Guidance is of two kinds. The first one concerns the unseen matters related to Allah *the Almighty* whose rationales and reasons we should not ask about. The second kind concerns the laws that organize the activities of life. We can freely think about them and compare these laws to other laws. When we draw a comparison between the Divine Laws and the man-made ones, we will find that the former excel the latter in ensuring the interests of the people. This is proven by the fact that many people have resorted to modifying man-made laws or changing them to be closer to Allah’s Laws. This obviously indicates that the human laws were made by people whose ability to think is limited, as they considered some aspects and forgot others. Afterwards, the events of life revealed the defects of these laws. By contrast, the Divine Law is prescribed by Allah from Whom nothing is hidden and Who is fully Aware of people’s actions and conditions. When He *the Almighty* sets the Laws, no one can modify or correct them.

With regards to the unseen matters and the acts of worship whose rationales are hidden, we should seek to find out the wisdom and the rationale behind them to the best of our abilities, but we will not be able to realize all of them. Their wisdom is fully known by Allah *the Almighty* who prescribed them. As the religious obligations are divinely prescribed, their wisdom is unlimited due to the Absolute Perfection of Allah *the Almighty*. If the human mind

realized some of the aspects of this wisdom, there are still many other aspects hidden from it. We believe in these aspects of wisdom that we did not realize as they are known to Him *the Almighty*.

Belief entails believing in something and acting upon it just because it has come from Allah *the Almighty* and not due to the rationale behind it. This is the lofty rank of Belief that Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* reached. He used to receive the commands from Prophet Muhammad, saying, ‘If he [Prophet Muhammad] has said this, then he is truthful’, without any discussion or search for the rationale behind the commands. The only rationale for accepting the religious obligations is that Allah *the Almighty* commands the believer to do them. For example, some people think that the rationale of ablution is personal hygiene, but it is broader than that. This is because if we do not find water, we can prepare ourselves for prayer by wiping over our faces and hands with dust. Clearly, the matter is not just about personal hygiene, but rather about following what Allah *the Almighty* prescribed as a way of preparing ourselves to stand before Him *Glorified is He* in prayer.

The chapter under discussion is also called ‘*Al-Jamal*’ (Beauty). Beauty is something relative, and thus people differ as to its definition. But we can say it means the symmetry of the formation of something that satisfies and pleases the person with a sound nature. It means that every matter is consistent with the aspect of its beauty; the beauty of silk is its smoothness, the bat is to be rough, the eye is to be big, the mouth is to be narrow. Therefore, beauty refers to the harmony between the initial circumstances and the conclusion, the harmony between the object and its function, not with what the soul desires.

This is because it, that is the soul, may desire something harmful. Furthermore, it may desire what is not beautiful. For example, we all hope our children will be successful, but beauty means that the hard-working student succeeds and the lazy one fails. The one who considers beauty should take an account of the initial circumstances and the conclusions, not regard one side apart from the others. Consequently, lust recompensed by painful punishment; negligence that leads to success; and hard-work that leads to failure cannot be classified as ‘beauty’.

This is also the case with the beauty in this chapter. Man is able to see that people's lives vary in many ways: health, wealth, children, authority, high rank, power and knowledge. One should have the firm creed that these differences are Allah's Bounties. He is a Just Lord Who distributes His Bounties among His slaves fairly, as He regards them equally. Without this creed, man will receive the events that he considers evil with discontent, objecting to Allah's Decree and Predestination. This feeling is enough to ruin man's life and relations with other people. He will be envious, harbouring a grudge against those who excelled him. But if he understood that the Lord's Bounties are distributed equally among the people, he will not grudge anyone and the poor will not give a look of hatred to the rich. Out of Allah's Wisdom, He made such variance between the people and bestowed His Bounties on them equally.

This variance leads to the reformation of the universe, as Allah *the Almighty* does not want identical human beings; rather, He wants ones that have to integrate with each other, which ensures cooperation and intermingling between them. This variance in giving is the main reason behind people's need that connects them to each other. In this sense, variance is one of the aspects of beauty in Allah's creation. In this connection, the Lord *the Almighty* says: 'Do they distribute the mercy of your Lord? It is We who have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of this world and have raised some of them above others in degrees [of rank] that they may make use of one another for service...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32). We have said that the verse does not define the ones who are raised and those over whom they were raised. That is because each one of us excels in one aspect and is excelled in another, as the people receive equal bestowals from Allah.

Consequently, man should receive Allah's Distribution of blessings with contentment and submission, acting politely with Allah, the Bestower of the Blessings. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Nay! Man does transgress all bounds because he sees himself [as being] free from want' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7). Not needing other people could make the person exceed the limits. One should consider how he needs the people, in what way he suffers disability and weakness. In this connection, one of the people of knowledge was asked, 'Why is it that man is the only one who acts haughtily?' He said that this is



because the other creatures only experience Allah's Attribute of Compelling Power and Mightiness. They were created with the command, 'Be', and have no free choice. By contrast, man experiences Allah's Attributes of Kindness, Mercy and Benevolence, and does not experience His Compelling Power and Mightiness. Had he witnessed this Might, he will not have acted haughtily. What incited him to act haughtily is that he thought he was great, but if he had recalled his Lord's Greatness, he will not have acted haughtily.

The beauty in the chapter of *Al-Ikhlās* stems from the fact that Allah *the Almighty* is One God for all people and creatures. He is the God of the rich and the poor. He bestows His Bounties equally to all people and has one scale which is based on His Wisdom and Ever-Watchfulness. When the human beings believe in that, they will have a pleasant life.

In the chapter of *Az-Zumar*, Allah *the Almighty* explains to us the beauty we see in the chapter of Beauty saying: 'Allah sets forth an example: a man belonging to (several) partners who differ with each other, and a man belonging entirely to one master. Are the two alike in comparison?' (*az-Zumar*: 29) Is a slave owned by one master equal to the one owned by many differing partners?! The beautiful situation is to be owned by one God. The example here is amply clear and precisely expresses the meaning of beauty in Allah's creation.

The chapter in question is also called '*Al-Ma'rifa*' (Knowledge) because monotheism and affirming Allah's Oneness represent the essence of knowledge. After firm belief in this creed, one receives the Way of Guidance that organises his activities in life. It is a comprehensive Way that cannot be modified.

Moreover, it is called *Al-Mu'awwidha* (the chapter of Refuge) because it is placed next to *Al-Mu'awwidhatayn*: 'Say [O Prophet Muhammad], "I seek refuge with the Lord of the daybreak"' (*al-Falaq*: 1) and: 'Say, "I seek refuge with the Lord of people"' (*an-Nas*: 1). It is as if the chapter in question is considered the third of these two chapters. Seeking refuge entails the existence of something we seek refuge from and a power in which we seek refuge. It is as though this chapter tells us what we should seek refuge in, which is the One God, regardless of those who seek refuge in their false deities. That is, these chapters direct our attention to the true God we should seek refuge in to be protected from harm.

Furthermore, it is called *Al-Muqashqisha* (the Cure), which refers to curing the ill body. When the body is unsymmetrically constituted, it is inflicted with diseases. Likewise, man's creed suffers diseases when it is inflicted with misconceptions and misunderstandings of the One God Who created everything that exists. Similarly, the state of existence is interpreted in the light of the created beings; the disorder of their creed leads to corrupt behaviour and, therefore, the corruption and the collapse of the society.

Moreover, this chapter is called *An-Naja* (Salvation), which means being saved from the fire. It is said that monotheism is one of the doors of paradise. Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called this chapter *An-Nisba* (Association) due to the people of Quraysh asking about this. It is narrated that the cause of its revelation is that Quraysh sent 'Amir ibn Tofayl to ask Prophet Muhammad about the Deity he worships. He said to him, 'O Muhammad, you have rebelled against us [causing disunity among us], assaulted our deities, despised our way of thinking and abandoned the religion of your fathers and forefathers. If you are poor, we will make you rich; if you are sick or bewitched, we will cure you; and if you desire any woman, we will give her to you', whereupon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'I am not poor, bewitched or desirous of any woman. Rather, I am Allah's Messenger who was sent to free you from worshipping idols and to call you to worship Allah instead'.<sup>(1)</sup>

As they used to worship deities made of rocks or trees, he asked Prophet Muhammad about the nature of his God, or he said, 'Enumerate the genealogy of your Lord', just as the Arabs used to ascribe the son to his father. Thereupon, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* recited: 'Say, "He is Allah, the One; Allah, the Self-Sufficient. He begot no one nor was He born. And no one is comparable to Him"' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1-4). Thus, he negated the two ends of the genealogical connection that they were familiar with, which is one's father and one's son.

The Arabs used to name their children and often ascribed the newborn child to his father, saying, for example, 'Mohamed, the son of so-and-so'. It is

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(1) See *Ar-Razi, Mafatih Al-Ghaib*, 32/356; and *Al-Mawardi, Tafsir*, 6/370.

true that we are Allah's creation, but He made us nations and tribes to know each other. One of the means of knowing each other is to have distinctive names. For example, if a father has three sons, will he give them the same name?! As the people are many, distinctive names must also be many to be able to know each other. His saying: 'O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another...' (*al-Hujurat*: 13) does not refer to the distinction between one group of people and another, or one tribe and another. In fact, getting to know each other through the names is related to the individuals to be able to ascribe the action to its doer, knowing the good to reward them and the bad to punish them. In this way, no one is recompensed for another person's fault.

After this, Allah *the Almighty* shows the criterion for preference among people: '...Indeed, the most noble of you in the Sight of Allah are those of you who are the most mindful of Him...' (*al-Hujurat*: 13). Therefore, the son is attributed to his father to be known by him because he has no other distinctive description except his father. In some cases the son becomes more well-known than his father, and as a result the father is known by his son, being called, 'Mohammed, the father of so-and-so'. In this regard, a poet said,

They said, 'Abu As-Saqr belongs to the tribe of Shayban',  
but I say, 'No, it is Shayban that belong to him'  
How many a father is honoured by a son of high rank,  
as 'Adnan was honoured by Allah's Messenger [Muhammad]

The chapter under discussion is also called *Nur al-Quran* (The Light of the Quran). The Quran itself is light, so this chapter is light upon light. We do not see light itself, but we use it to see objects. To be able to see light, we should bring a stronger light to distinguish a source of light with another source. Thus, the Quran is the light that sets for you the luminous way by which one walks upon guidance and insight. Similarly, the chapter of *Al-Ikhlās* is called *Nur Al-Quran* because it teaches us the creed by which we take the way of guidance, illuminating that way for us.

Moreover, it is called *Al-Walaya* (Invincible Protection), as in Allah's saying: 'In that situation, the only invincible protection (*al-walaya*) comes

from Allah, Alone' (*al-Kahf*: 44). Allah, the true God, is in charge of the believer and grants victory to the one who needs it. In the affairs of life, one should depend on Him *Glorified is He* and not seek anyone else's support, for all matters are fully controlled by Him Alone: '...such as have no power either for good or harm for themselves?' (*ar-Ra'd*: 16)

Now, let us focus on explaining the meanings of the verses. The chapter starts with the command 'say', followed by the third person pronoun 'He', then the majestic Name 'Allah', and lastly five descriptions of Him: '...the One; Allah, the Self-Sufficient. He begot no one nor was He born. And no one is comparable to Him' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1-4). Thus, there are eight points in the chapter we will discuss and explain.

First, the command 'say' here is directed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and he delivered it to us as it is. He did not imitate the people's way of conveying reports by focusing on the content and not the form, or the meanings and not the words. He adhered in his conveyance to the words verbatim; he did not say to the people, 'He is Allah, the One', but rather: 'Say, "He is Allah, the One"' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1). It is as if he is saying to the people, 'Do not blame me for I am only a conveyer of the Message which I received from Allah. This is the command I was ordered to convey to you. I have no intervention in it.'

Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* received and conveyed the words of the Quran verbatim, and not its meanings. The verses in which the command, 'say' is used include: 'Say, "O Disbelievers..." (*al-Kāfirūn*: 1), and: 'They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say, "In both of them there is a great sin..." (*al-Baqara*: 219), as well as: 'And they ask you about menstruation. Say, "It is a discomfort..." (*al-Baqara*: 222), and also: 'They ask you concerning the new moon. Say, "They are times appointed for (the benefit of) men, and (for) the Pilgrimage..." (*al-Baqara*: 189), and: '...And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say, "What you can spare..." (*al-Baqara*: 219).

In one position where the expression 'they ask you' is employed, the particle '*fā'*' is used with it, which is His saying: 'And they ask you about the mountains. Then (*fā'*) say, "My Lord will carry them away from the roots"'

(*Ta Ha*: 105). The scholars say that the question here indicates that the people will ask Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the future about the mountains. This is one example of the miracles written in the Quran. It informs us that the people will ask him in the future. The opponents of the Call could have abstained from posing this question to accuse the Quran of telling lies. However, they could not act differently from what Allah ordained for them; they actually asked about the mountains some time after this verse was revealed.

Continuing with the chapter under discussion, the third person pronoun ‘he’ refers to someone who is absent. As we know, pronouns are divided into first, second and third person. That is, we have three cases. The first person is known because a person can say, for example, ‘I did such-and-such’, and the people will not ask him, ‘Who are you?’ because he is present before their eyes. Likewise, the second person is addressed in the speech and is also present. We cannot ask him, ‘Who are you?’

As for the third person ‘he’, it bears a vague reference and needs clarification, which is called the reference of the pronoun. Consequently, this pronoun is only used when there is a previously mentioned reference for it. For example, one can say, ‘I met Zayd and treated him generously’. Here, the pronoun ‘him’ refers to Zayd. We have previously clarified that the pronoun either indicates all it refers to, as in the previous example, a part of it or something equivalent to it. An example of something equivalent is when one says, ‘I gave a *dirham* and a half as charity’, (lit. ‘a *dirham* and a half of it’). After I gave the one *dirham* as charity, I cannot give half of it as charity as the *dirham* has already been given out. Clearly, the pronoun ‘it’ (in the literal translation) does not refer to half the *dirham* mentioned here but an equivalent amount. And the pronoun indicates part of the reference in Allah’s saying: ‘...and no elderly person has his life lengthened nor is anything diminished of his life, but it is all in a book; surely this is easy to Allah’ (*Fatir*: 11). The pronoun ‘his’ does not refer to the man, but to part of him. How is this?

The scholars say that the person has already lived say one hundred years. But how can this elapsed part of his lifetime be diminished? This is impossible. Clearly, the pronoun refers to a part of one’s lifetime. The reference can consist

of many parts. His saying: '...and no elderly person has his life lengthened...' (*Fatir*: 11) does not refer to the whole lifetime but to what remains of it. It is as we have two parts of man's lifetime: his lifetime that has elapsed and lifetime to come. The pronoun refers to the remaining part of his lifetime.

The pronoun 'he' in the chapter in question is a third person pronoun and must have a previously mentioned reference. But where is its reference? One may ask about the one to whom this pronoun refers. The scholars say that the only reference is the believers' faith and certitude that it refers to Allah *the Almighty*. It is as if reality and the truth state that this pronoun refers to Him *Glorified is He*. This is why the pronoun is the strongest kind of the defining elements. However, after the majestic Name 'Allah', it became even more definite.

Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* is unseen yet He reaches the rank of being present through His effects on the created beings. When one says 'He' with regards to Allah, he declares that He is One. As we have said concerning monotheism, Allah *the Almighty* is One, whether we declare that fact or not. However, the third person indicates that Allah *the Almighty* is unseen. We may ask why? This is because He is the Light by which we perceive the objects yet He Himself is unperceivable. We cannot perceive Him unless a stronger light makes Him visible. However, this is not possible because there is no light greater than His? For this reason, we cannot see Him.

Were Allah *the Almighty* perceivable, He will not deserve to be worshipped. This is because perception is a kind of encompassing, like perceiving the answer to a geometrical question. Likewise, if Allah *the Almighty* is perceivable, He will be encompassed, which is impossible for Him. Thus, due to Allah's Greatness, He is unseen: 'No vision can comprehend Him, but He comprehends (all) vision; and He is the Most Subtle, the All-Aware...' (*al-An'am*: 103).

That is why it is said, 'Being unable to realize something is a realization in itself'. We have clarified this matter saying that if we ask a secondary school student to answer a mathematical equation beyond what he has studied, he will say, 'I cannot solve it'. Why is this?

This is because he did not study the theories that lead to the answer. For this reason he does not have the key to answer that question and, therefore, he

acknowledges at the beginning he cannot answer it. Another student may try hard but fail to answer the question. This means that acknowledging one's disability to realize the answer is a realization in itself. Likewise, acknowledging that Allah *the Almighty* is unperceivable is a realization. The pronoun 'He' indicates that Allah *the Almighty* is unseen but the effects of His Power and creation are apparent. His Essence is unperceivable but the traces of His Attributes are manifested in the universe.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'Allah, the Self-Sufficient' (*al-Ikhlās*: 2). The Arabic word '*As-Samad*' (Self-Sufficient) has two meanings. The first one is the matter that has neither a body nor an essence. The second meaning is the master who is asked to meet any need. Allah *the Almighty* is the One that the people invoke to meet their needs and He is the Master Who has perfect Sovereignty.

As for His saying: 'He begot no one nor was He born' (*al-Ikhlās*: 3), it is similar to His saying: '...far be it from His [Allah's] Glory that He should have a son...' (*an-Nisā'*: 171). Allah *the Almighty* is far removed from having a son. Consequently, how can the people claim He has a son? All praise is to Allah Who has not taken a son. The son is sought to be an extension of the mention of his father whose life is not guaranteed. He bears the name of his father after his death and inherits his property. Moreover, having a son is meant for the sustenance of the species, which does not depend on having only one son.

Allah *the Almighty* does not need to beget a son, nor does He need a wife to give birth to such a son. This is because the one who needs a son is imperfect and needs him to rectify this imperfection. Allah *Glorified is He* is far removed over imperfection and having a son, as He says: '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). How can Allah have a son while He has created the heavens and the earth wonderfully without any previous pattern? Why does He *the Almighty* need a son?

As for His saying: 'And no one is comparable to Him' (*al-Ikhlās*: 4), it means that no one is equivalent, a rival or comparable to Allah *the Almighty*. No one is similar to Him, for He is incomparable in His Essence, Attributes of

Perfection and Actions, a fact which is clear in His saying: '...nothing is like Him' (*ash-Shura*: 11), and: '...therefore do not set up rivals to Allah while you know' (*al-Baqara*: 22). The rival is the one who is comparable to another. Any reasonable person negates anyone's comparability to Allah, for nothing is similar to Him. His is One in His Power, Omnipotence, Creation and Essence. There is neither a rival to nor a partner with Him.

The absence of any rival and peer to Allah *the Almighty* is in the interest of life in the universe. This is because this fact means that all the people will be under His Control and Justice. Hence, negating the presence of any rival to Allah *Glorified is He* is in the interest of the human being.



the chapter of

***al-Falaq***



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

**T**he chapter of *al-Falaq* <sup>(1)</sup>:

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ ﴿١﴾ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ ﴿٢﴾  
 وَمِنْ شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ ﴿٣﴾ وَمِنْ شَرِّ النَّفَّاثَاتِ فِي الْعُقَدِ ﴿٤﴾  
 وَمِنْ شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ ﴿٥﴾

Say [Prophet], ‘I seek refuge with the Lord of daybreak [1]  
against the harm in what He has created [2] the harm in the  
night when darkness gathers [3] the harm in witches when  
they blow on knots [4] the harm in the envier when he  
envies’ [5] (The Quran, *al-Falaq*: 1-5)

The saying of Allah (God) <sup>(2)</sup> *the Almighty*: ‘I seek refuge with...’ (*al-Falaq*: 1) means that one seeks the protection of Allah *Glorified is He*. It entails someone seeking refuge, someone against whom it is sought, and someone with whom it is sought. Here, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is commanded to seek refuge with the Lord of the daybreak against four things,

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- (1) The chapter of *Al-Falaq*, counting 5 verses and 23 words, is number 113 in the order of *Al-Mushaf* (the written copy of the Quran). It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *Al-Fil*. This chapter, along with that of *An-Nas*, are called *Al-Mu‘awwidhatayn* (two chapters of refuge).
- (2) The Islamic concept of ‘Allah’ is not the same as the Christian and Jewish concept of ‘God’. But the word ‘Allah’ does not refer to a tribal god or the God of only Muslims; it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use ‘Allah’ rather than ‘God’ as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.

which are: '...from the harm of whatever He has created, from the harm of darkness as it gathers, from the harm of those who blow on knots, and from the harm of the envier when he envies' (*al-Falaq*: 1-5).

With regards to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...the Lord of the daybreak' (*al-Falaq*: 1), the Lord *Glorified is He* mentions the reasons that encourage the person to seek refuge with Him, as He is the Lord of the daybreak. The Arabic word '*al-falaq*' (daybreak) could refer to the morning brightness that penetrates darkness. Light is a means of guidance by which one takes the right path. This word could also refer to what splits open thereby coming to life, as in His saying: 'Surely, Allah causes the grain and the stone to germinate (*faliq*)...' (*al-An'am*: 95), which uses the word '*faliq*' (germinate), which is derived from the word '*al-falaq*'. In this sense, Allah *the Almighty* is the Lord of all existence, the One Who wonderfully created and spread out all the creatures. According to either meaning, Allah *the Almighty* deserves that we seek refuge with Him.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* teaches us the things we should seek refuge against; the first one is mentioned in His saying: '...from the harm of whatever He has created' (*al-Falaq*: 1). This indicates that certain aspects of some of Allah's creatures are evil. That is, the created beings are not purely good or evil; rather, they have some aspects of good and other ones of evil. This is why the Lord *Glorified is He* instructs us to seek refuge with Him against the evil aspects of the creatures for only the good ones to be left.

For example, if we consider the cattle and the animals that Allah *the Almighty* made subservient to man, like the camel, we find the little child can ride them. On the contrary, men run away from a small snake. This is only because the former, unlike the latter, was subjected to man. This proves that it is not man who subjected the camel with his power, for had Allah *the Almighty* not made it subservient to the human beings, they will have neither been able to benefit from it nor been able to control it.

Thus, the matter is not all about the creation of these animals, for that was followed by subjecting them to serve the human being. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Do they not see that We have created for them of what Our Hands have created, the cattle so that they are their owners. And We have

subdued them to their [use] so that some of them they have for riding and some they eat' (*Ya Sin*: 72). The scholars say that the possession of the cattle depends not only on the creation but also on subjecting them to human beings; if the possession had depended only on the creation, man could have domesticated all creatures and made use of them.

The one who reflects on Allah's creatures finds good and evil aspects in them. For example, the snake's poison is deadly for someone but a cure for others. The snake manifests its evil side when we try to make it do other than what it was created for. Furthermore, the matter of evil is not all about transgression, for Allah *the Almighty* has placed signs in His creation to make human beings feel their need for Him and feel they can never dispense with Him, however powerful the person may be. Consequently, Allah *Glorified is He* made some of His creatures not prone to domestication in order to cause fear and disturbance for the human being to remind him of his Lord, depending on and invoking Him to be safe from such creatures. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* teaches us to seek refuge with Him by saying: 'I seek refuge with the Lord of the daybreak from the harm of whatever He has created' (*al-Falaq*: 1-2) only because He is fully Able to protect us from all harms and evil.

As for His saying: '...from the harm of darkness as it gathers' (*al-Falaq*: 3), this verse refers to the night that shrouds the world with darkness. As it covers everything with its darkness, the human being cannot take any precaution against dangerous situations, like confronting a wild beast or an enemy lying in wait. All such dangers are clear during the day. This means Allah's saying: '...from the harm of darkness as it gathers' (*al-Falaq*: 3) signifies seeking refuge against dangers that the human being cannot avert in the darkness of the night. Although such dangers are subcategorized under His saying: '...from the harm of whatever He has created' (*al-Falaq*: 2), they were mentioned to be specifically highlighted.

Let us reflect on the meaning of the Arabic word '*ghasiq*' (darkness) and '*waqab*' (gathers), for every word has a basic root. The root of the word '*ghasiq*' refers to what spurts forth. As for '*waqab*', it refers to a hole in a rock in the mountain caused by the rain. This is only possible when rain falls abundantly and continuously. The rain is formed by the clouds that gather.

The human being is familiar with the darkness of the night, but he does not think that the clouds that gather together during the day, causing darkness, to be similar to that of night. Afterwards, the rain falls. What is remarkable is the darkness that happens during the day, not the night. It is as if the clouds shroud the world in darkness when the rain falls abundantly, causing holes in the rocks of the mountains.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...the harm of those who blow on knots' (*al-Falaq*: 4), the word '*an-naффathat*' ([the souls] who blow) alludes to the female or male witches. The rationalists denied two matters mentioned in Allah's saying: '...from the harm of those who blow on knots, and from the harm of the envier when he envies' (*al-Falaq*: 4-5). They denied that sorcery and envy can physically affect anything, claiming that they are irrational. The rationalistic school had goodwill at the beginning of the contemporary age of scientific advancement. This is because the Muslims in the East were connected to the renaissance of the West which allured some people with its scientific advancement.

Islam discussed some unseen matters that are beyond the perception of the human mind, and the rationalists wanted to make these creedal matters understandable and consistent with empirical science and the world we see with our eyes. Consequently, they interpreted these matters to comply with modern science. They wanted to highlight that all the matters of the Islamic religion are subject to the empirical science and experimentation. But if the creedal matters were like this, they will not need a Messenger or any Belief in a God.

However, should all the matters be subject to empirical science? For example, there is no difference between electricity in America and Russia. That is to say that the matter which is subject to empirical science and experimentation is not open to disputation. But, as long as one believes in the One God and His Attributes, he should not rely on his mind with regards to accepting all that Allah created; some of the creatures are unperceivable to us and the mind affirms their existence through Belief. However, the mind itself can be used to affirm this matter referring to the advancement of science. This is because there were many unperceivable matters in the past that were not subject to empirical science and the human mind. Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty*

revealed them to be perceivable and subject to empirical science, as in the case of electricity, microbes, etc. In the past, no one believed in the existence of such creatures.

Consequently, why should the matters that were previously unseen not be considered a proof that the mind is not a suitable criterion for deciding what exists and what does not exist? If one is consistent with his thought, he will recognize that many perceivable matters used to be considered unseen and if one had been told about them before, he will not have believed in them. Clearly, the mind is not a criterion for understanding matters beyond its ability. With regards to religious matters, the aim is to make sure whether a certain matter has been conveyed from Allah *the Almighty* or not. If it has come from Him, one should directly believe in it without questioning how it happened, given that he has previously believed in Allah *the Almighty*.

We have previously clarified that unseen matters are of two kinds. The first one is temporal and certain circumstances lead to its detection when Allah *the Almighty* wants to reveal it. Consequently, we find out about it through a new invention, discovery or accident. The second kind is the absolute unseen that no one knows except Allah and for which no circumstances can happen that will lead to its detection. With regards to the first kind, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And they will never compass anything of His Knowledge except that which He wills...’ (*al-Baqara*: 255). The knowledge could be perceived by the people according to Allah’s Will. With regards to the second kind, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘The Knower of the unseen! He does not reveal His secrets to any, except to him Whom He chooses as a Messenger ...’ (*al-Jinn*: 26-27). Here, the human beings have nothing to do with this kind of unseen, as there is no way to know it; yet Allah *the Almighty* may benevolently give some matters thereof to some people He is pleased with.

Therefore, we say to those who deny sorcery that their denial contradicts the Quran and the authentic Hadiths. Their view is incorrect because no personal reasoning is acceptable when a sacred text handling the issue exists. Instead, intelligent minds should be busy trying to make *Al-‘Ilm Al-Barzakhi* (knowledge of unclear matters) more understandable for the person in the street. If there is no sorcery, how can we interpret the verses related to it? In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And they followed what the devils chanted

of sorcery in the reign of Sulaiman (Solomon), and Sulaiman (Solomon) was not an unbeliever, but the devils disbelieved: they taught men sorcery. And that was sent down to the two angels in Babel, Harut and Marut, yet these two taught no man until they had said, "Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not disbelieve". Yet, even then men learned from these two magic to sow discord between a man and his wife; but they cannot hurt anyone with it except with Allah's Permission, and they learned what harmed them and did not profit them. And certainly they knew that he who bought it [magic] will have no share of good in the Hereafter. Evil was the price for which they sold their souls, if they only knew' (*al-Baqara*: 102).

It seems as though there is a bargain and gaining profits from it depends on learning something from one higher in rank. Allah *the Almighty* wants to direct our attention to the issue of the jinn whose nature is different from that of human beings. Unlike the jinn, the human being cannot penetrate through a wall and has limited abilities with regards to place and time. As for the jinn, it can penetrate and flow in man like the blood in the veins. Who gave him such abilities? It is his Creator Who fashioned him like this, out of fire.

In addition, the human being was created from mud and has a density, but the devil is transparent like fire. They are different concerning what they are formed from. However Allah *the Almighty* wants to tell us that the element of creation does not restrict the created beings, as He *the Almighty* can give the lower privileges that are given to the uppermost, even if the causal factors are taken into account.

For example, in the story of Prophet Sulaiman *peace be upon him* Allah relates him as saying: 'He said, "O chiefs! Which of you can bring to me her [the Queen of Sheba's] throne before they come to me in submission?"' (*an-Naml*: 38) Thereupon, one of the jinn presented the first offer. He was a clever jinni, not a stupid one. Both kinds exist among the jinn, as in the case of human beings. That is, the one who spoke was not a normal human being or jinni, and he was not a clever human being either. Rather, the one who spoke was a skilful jinni because the required mission was great: '...O chiefs! Which of you can bring to me her throne before they come to me in submission?' (*an-Naml*: 38)



This means that the Queen of Sheba, Balqis, had already set out from Yemen on her way to Sulaiman. Clearly, the time left to take the throne and deliver it to Sulaiman was short, needing a highly skilled one to do it. That is why when the jinni spoke, he defined the time he needed, saying: ‘One audacious among the jinn said, “I will bring it to you before you rise up from your place”...’ (*an-Naml*: 39). As for the human being who had knowledge of the Book, he defined a shorter time that suited his abilities: ‘One who had knowledge of the Book said, “I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye”...’ (*an-Naml*: 40).

Here, the power of the knowledgeable human being was greater than that of the jinni. This story shows that the jinni did not derive his skill from what he was created from, but rather it was a gift from the Creator Who gives it to whomever He wishes; however, Allah *the Almighty* is fully Able to give the weaker, the human being, a better skill than that of the stronger, the jinn. This fact is clear in His saying: ‘And they followed what the devils chanted of sorcery in the reign of Sulaiman (Solomon), and Sulaiman (Solomon) was not an unbeliever, but the devils disbelieved; they taught men sorcery. And that was sent down to the two angels in Babel, Harut and Marut ...’ (*al-Baqara*: 102). That is, the angels taught the jinn who in turn taught human beings. We should consider the idea of having equal opportunities and means when discussing this point. What makes the human beings lead their life dealing well with others is the existence of a Supreme Power that makes them behaviour well. If someone beats another, a stronger one will do the same to the former. Thus, having equal opportunities and means maintains balance in the society. For example, we are sitting here without any firearms, so if someone enters having a gun, he will defeat us with his power. However, if he knew we all have guns, he will not dare to attack us. This illustrates that transgression stems from the inequality of opportunities or means. If the people have equal opportunities and means, all the lives of those in the society will be similar, without any transgression.

As for jinn, Allah *the Almighty* made them stronger than us, but He said to us, ‘Due to My Power, I can give you a power greater than that of the jinn, enabling you to control them. However, pay attention that this is not in your interest, for such power will make you stronger than other human beings,

causing disorder in society and the absence of equal opportunities and means. This will result in transgression and the overstepping of limits’.

We have previously clarified that man can bear a trust but falls short in fulfilling it. For example, a man buys a gun and says he will only use it in the case of self-defence or against thieves. However, he may undergo a situation that makes him shoot someone due to lack of self-control and his feelings overwhelming him.

Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...yet these two taught no man until they had said, “Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not disbelieve”’ (*al-Baqara*: 102). They were a trial because they will teach the person what makes him stronger than his fellow human beings, causing him to transgress against them. Some people say, ‘Teach me sorcery and I will use it to do good’. In fact, all those who sought to learn sorcery said this. However, after learning it, they used it to harm the people and to do evil deeds.

On the other hand, if a person learned sorcery and possessed the power that enabled him to do many things, will this change the predestination Allah arranged for the people? That is why we find the sorcerers poor and distressed, even their facial features are ugly as if they are like the jinn. They die while not possessing even a garment and they are afflicted in their health, children, etc. This is despite them learning sorcery to be rich and honoured; they became poor and humiliated. The Quran directs our attention to this fact, saying: ‘Indeed, there were certain men from mankind who took refuge with certain males from the jinn, but they increased them in fear and transgression’ (*al-Jinn*: 6).

If the deniers of sorcery reflected on this matter, they will find it happens in reality. Allah *the Almighty* may give some people the ability to subject the jinn that have the ability to take different shapes. One of them may go to a beautiful woman while taking an ugly shape of her husband, causing hatred between them. This is one of the ways of separating between the husband and his wife. Thus, there is no argument from those who deny sorcery, for the factual reality affirms it.

The human being can subject the jinn through certain ways. Due to Allah’s Mercy towards man, He made the power of the jinni limited. The

image he takes restricts him. That is to say that if he appeared in the form of a man or an animal and was killed, he actually dies because the image restricts him. This is how Allah *the Almighty* limited the jinn's power and transgression against the human beings. If this was not the case, they will have disturbed our life and struck fear into our hearts.

For this reason, the jinni does not confront someone who understands the reality of jinn and how to deal with them. He fears him and does not take any shape before him. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* caught a very wicked one among the jinn who appeared in a form of a man. He intended to tie him to one of the pillars of the mosque in order that the boys of Medina play with him. However, he remembered the supplication of his brother Sulaiman (Solomon) which Allah relates: 'My Lord, forgive me, and give me a kingdom which will not belong to anyone after me...' (*Sad*: 35).<sup>(1)</sup> To sum up, the jinni is restricted by the image he takes and when the human being pays attention to that fact, the jinni runs away. That is why he is described as 'the slinking whisperer'. It is Allah *the Almighty* Who controls his power.

Furthermore, sorcery does not change realities, a fact which is clear in the story of Prophet Musa (Moses) with the sorcerers. The Quran describes their sorcery, saying: '...they bewitched the people's eyes and terrified them, and produced great sorcery' (*al-A'raf*: 116). That is, sorcery deludes the beholder but does not change the action itself. The Lord *the Most High* says: '...it seemed to him on account of their magic as if they were running' (*Ta Ha*: 66).

When Allah *the Almighty* wanted to train Prophet Musa *peace be upon him* to confront Pharaoh and his sorcerers, He *the Almighty* showed him the matter of the staff: "“And what is that in your right hand, O Musa (Moses)?” He [Musa] said, “It is my staff; I lean upon it, and I bring down leaves for my sheep and I have therein other uses”. He [Allah] said, “Throw it down, O Musa (Moses)”. So he threw it down, and thereupon it was a snake, moving swiftly’ (*Ta Ha*: 17-20). This is a miracle and not sorcery. As the staff turned into a real snake, it frightened Musa and the sorcerers. They submitted to Musa once

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(1) *A Hadith to that effect is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 39/541.*

they saw this miracle, saying: 'We believe in the Lord of Harun (Aaron) and Musa (Moses)' (*al-Hajj*: 70).

Aaron was mentioned first here to indicate that the miracle was not performed by Musa's power nor was it related to the challenge between him and the sorcerers. Rather, it was a real miracle only performed by a Power beyond that of Musa. That is why they declared their faith, saying: 'We believe in the Lord of Harun (Aaron) and Musa (Moses)' (*al-Hajj*: 70).

In this connection, we should discuss the incident when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was bewitched by Lubayd ibn Al-A'sam. This incident is accepted because it was mentioned in *Sahih* Al-Bukhari.<sup>(1)</sup> However, the rationalists say that this matter casts doubt on the truthfulness of what Prophet Muhammad has come with. We say that doubt is possible when sorcery changes the nature of the mind, as his mission was based on the mind. However, sorcery does not affect the mind; rather it affects the outer phenomena. That is why 'Aisha said, 'He began to think that he was doing something which he was not actually doing'.

But why did this happen to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? The scholars say that the disbelievers' confrontation was of two kinds. The first one was open and the second was hidden. The strong one confronts his enemy while the weak one plots secretly. Allah *the Almighty* tells us that the

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(1) 'Aisha said, 'Magic was worked on Prophet Muhammad so that he began to think that he was doing something which he was not actually doing. One day he invoked (Allah) for a long period of time, and then said, "I feel that Allah has inspired me how to cure myself. Two persons came to me (in my dream) and sat, one by my head and the other by my feet. One of them asked the other, 'What does this man suffer from?' The other replied, 'He has been bewitched'. The first asked, 'Who has bewitched him?' The other replied, 'Lubayd ibn Al-A'sam'. The first one asked, 'What material did he use?' The other replied, 'A comb, the hair gathered on it, and the outer skin of the pollen of the male date-palm'. The first asked, 'Where are those things?' The other replied, 'They are in the well of Dharwan'". Consequently, Prophet Muhammad went out towards the well and then returned, saying to me on his return, "Its date-palms (the date-palms near the well) are like the heads of the devils". I asked, "Did you take out those things with which the magic was worked?" He said, "No, for I have been cured by Allah and I am afraid that this action may spread evil amongst the people". Later on the well was filled up with earth'. See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, *Hadith* no. 3268, 5763, 5766 and 6391; and Muslim, *Sahih*, *Hadith* no. 43/2189.

power by which the disbelievers confronted Prophet Muhammad as well as their hidden plots will not grant them victory. This is because Allah *the Almighty* told him the matter of sorcery, guided him to the cure and exposed the disbelievers' plot. Their sorcery had to affect him and his body for them to be able to see and make sure that their sorcery had inflicted him. However, Prophet Muhammad's mind remained conscious and sound. This narration affirms that he was bewitched.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...and from the harm of the envier when he envies' (*al-Falaq*: 5), it affirms the reality of envy which means to wish for the removal of a blessing bestowed on the envied person. It is caused physically with the glance of the eye. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* has given some people a weapon like a gun, rifle and a sword to use against anyone they wanted.

But what prevents man from transgressing against other people with these weapons? The scholars say it is one's Belief in Allah and following the Way of Guidance. Likewise, the envier has the weapon of envy and can use it if he wants. However, is envy related to the will of the envier or does it have a compelling force? When man envies a person who has been blessed, he does this willingly. This is because the envier has weak faith, for if he understood the reality of how Allah bestows His Blessings, he will not grudge anyone who has blessings.

In fact, the envier objects to Allah, the Bestower of Blessings. The envier is only deterred by returning to Allah's Way of Guidance. Therefore, the envier does the act of envy intentionally. That is why we are commanded when we see a blessing belonging to us or other people to say, 'In the Name of Allah. It is as Allah has pleased, there is no power save from Allah'. When this statement is made, no one will be harmed and the person will be neither envied nor be an envier. As for the one who wants to envy, he holds grudges against other people and wishes for their blessings to be removed. He directs his envious eye and causes harm because he could not stop himself from using that weapon to harm the people.

As such, the matter of envy has two elements; the natural power of the envier and the intention to use that power or not. It is like the one who carries

a gun; he does not use it except when he intends to. If one asked about the wisdom behind giving that weapon if it harms the people and leads to transgression against them, we say, 'This is a trial for the person'. Allah *the Almighty* checks some people by means of others. Moreover, since the Lord taught us how to seek refuge with Him from such objects, these objects must have aspects of harm and evil, whether we realise them or not. The matter of envy is hidden, subtle and beyond our perception. That is why we can only take refuge with Allah *the Almighty* from it.

As one says, 'I seek refuge with the Lord of the daybreak and the harm of the people', this alludes to the fact that only Allah *the Almighty* can save us from such matters. Were they to constitute material dangers, man could prevent them by himself. However, as Allah *the Almighty* teaches us to seek refuge against them, being protected from them is beyond the ability of the human beings. That is why Allah talks in this chapter about darkness that hides objects. Afterwards, He *the Almighty* speaks in the chapter of *An-Nas* about satanic whispers and trickery that incite the soul to do evil. We invoke Allah to benefit us by the chapter of *Al-Ikhlās*, to protect us from calamities with the phrase: 'Say [O Prophet Muhammad], "I seek refuge with the Lord of the daybreak"' (*al-Falaq*: 1), and to protect us from the evil of ourselves and Satan with the phrase: 'Say [O Prophet], "I seek refuge with the Lord of people"' (*an-Nas*: 1).

the chapter of

***an-Nas***





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

**T**he chapter of *an-Nas* <sup>(1)</sup>:

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ ① مَلِكِ النَّاسِ ② إِلَهِ النَّاسِ ③  
 مِنْ شَرِّ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاسِ ④ الَّذِي يُوَسْوِسُ فِي صُدُورِ  
 النَّاسِ ⑤ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ ⑥

**Say, ‘I seek refuge with the Lord of people [1]  
 the controller of people [2] the God of people [3]  
 against the harm of the slinking whisperer — [4]  
 who whispers into the hearts of people — [5] whether they  
 be jinn or people’ [6] (The Quran, *an-Nas*: 1-6)**

The people are the species descending from Adam until the coming of the Hour. The orientalist have discussed the repetition of the word ‘people’ to cast doubt on the Quran. They said that this word is unnecessarily repeated here. The most important chapter they have discussed is that of *An-Nas* where Allah (God) <sup>(2)</sup> *the Almighty* says: ‘Say, “I seek refuge with the Lord of people, the King [and Ruler] of people, the God of people, from the harm of the

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- (1) The chapter of *An-Nas*, counting 6 verses and 20 words, is number 114 and the last chapter in the order of *Al-Mushaf*. It was revealed in Mecca after the chapter of *Al-Falaq*.  
 (2) The Islamic concept of ‘Allah’ is not the same as the Christian and Jewish concept of ‘God’. But the word ‘Allah’ does not refer to a tribal god or the God of only Muslims; it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use ‘Allah’ rather than ‘God’ as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.

slinking whisperer, who whispers into the hearts of people, whether they be jinn or people””(an-Nas: 1-5).

These orientalist thought that the word ‘people’ has the same meaning in each verse. As they lacked the natural ability to understand the Arabic language, they did not pay attention to the fact that this word has a different meaning in each verse. This is because Allah *the Almighty* wanted each word in the Quran to express an appropriate meaning. The word ‘people’ is general when it is related to a general rule. However, it has a specific meaning in other places in the Quran, as in His saying: ‘Or do they envy the people for what Allah has given them of His grace?’(an-Nisa’: 54)

Allah *the Almighty* says in the chapter in question: ‘Say [O Prophet Muhammad], “I seek refuge with the Lord of people”” (an-Nas: 1). This is a declaration of His Lordship over all the people. He is the Lord Who brought all the creatures into existence and no one can rebel against Him, as He is: ‘...the King [and Ruler] of people’ (an-Nas: 2). Allah *the Almighty* controls the people; He allows them to have a choice in some actions but strips this permission from them in other actions. The Lord *Glorified is He* does not compel the people to believe, but nothing will avail them except Belief. It is clear that Allah *the Almighty* made them free in matters related to the religious obligations but coerced in other matters.

For this reason, there is a difference between His saying: ‘Say [O Prophet Muhammad], “I seek refuge with the Lord of people”” (an-Nas: 1), and: ‘...the King [and Ruler] of people’ (an-Nas: 2). The first verse refers to the people being provided by the Lord and the second refers to them being controlled by Allah *the Almighty*. No one can rebel against Allah concerning matters for which they are coerced.

In the third verse: ‘...the God of people’ (an-Nas: 3), the word ‘people’ affirms that Allah *the Almighty* is the God Who is truly worthy of worship. He is the One Who protects man from which is mentioned in the fourth verse: ‘...from the harm of the slinking whisperer’ (an-Nas: 4), and in the fifth verse: ‘...who whispers into the hearts of people’ (an-Nas: 5). The slinking whisperer is the one who incites the human being to do evil deeds by whispering in his ear. He is slinking because he runs away when he hears one

say, 'I seek refuge with Allah against the cursed Satan'. He whispers into the hearts of the people.

We find that the word 'people' in this chapter refers to those who are provided and controlled by Allah, Whom they worship. They are the ones to whom Satan whispers. The one who whispers could be from the jinn or from the people. As such, there is no repetition here, for the meaning of the word 'people' suits the position where it is mentioned.

Seeking refuge means asking for Allah's Protection. A person does not seek refuge and protection except from the One Who is more powerful than the one who wants to harm him. When one recalls the meaning of seeking refuge and faithfully seeks the protection of the One who created the human beings and Satan, then Satan will run away as he knows you have sought refuge with the Powerful Creator. Allah *the Almighty* listens to the one who seeks refuge with Him and knows his sincerity in asking for it. As one seeks refuge against something he fears, this indicates that he is too weak to confront such an enemy.

If Satan has some keys to tempt the human soul due to the power given to him, then no power will be able to confront him except that of Allah *Glorified is He* Who created the human being and also Satan. Consequently, a person should seek refuge in Allah, as no one except Allah can protect the person from Satan. After all, Satan is in a continuous conflict with the human beings and will continue to be in a continuous conflict until the Hour is established.

With regards to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Say [O Prophet Muhammad], "I seek refuge with the Lord of people"' (*an-Nas*: 1), the address is directed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his followers. We are commanded to seek the protection of the Lord of the people Who is also: '...the King [and Ruler] of people' (*an-Nas*: 2) and '...the God of people' (*an-Nas*: 3). Satan shivers when a person seeks such refuge. When the believer repeats these frequently, Satan recognizes that such a worshipper will never be diverted from being obedient to being disobedient.

We seek refuge in Allah from the cursed Satan who is described as: '...the slinking whisperer' (*an-Nas*: 4). Allah *the Almighty* describes Satan as

the slinking whisperer who whispers into people's hearts. However, when Allah *the Almighty* is mentioned, he retreats. Satan controls the human being when he is not connected to the Lord. By contrast, when one is connected to the Lord and seeks refuge with Him, Satan retreats and abstains from whispering. He disappears when Allah is mentioned, but when he sees you are weak and heedless, he plays tricks and whispers to you. In such a case, you become an easily hunted prey for him.

The Satanic whispers are the charming words that tempt the person. The word '*waswasa*' (whispers) refers to the sound of the ringing of gold and jewelry, which are tempting like the whispers of Satan. That is, it refers to the sound of jewelry that attracts the ears and tempts a person to look at them. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* warns us against Satan saying that he will get to us by tempting and alluring us. If one becomes heedless of Allah, Satan will attack and whisper to him. However, Satan retreats when Allah *the Almighty* is mentioned, as he is powerless and will not challenge the Lord *the Most High*. Satan's conflict is with the people to make them forget Allah *Glorified is He* and turn away from Him.

In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* relates that Satan said: 'He said, "As You have caused me to remain disappointed, I will certainly lie in wait for them on Your Straight path. Then I will certainly come to them from before them and from behind them, and from their right-hand side and from their left-hand side; and You shall not find in most of them gratitude [for your Mercies]"' (*al-A'raf*: 16-17). Satan only lies in wait on the Straight Path, for the one who chose the way of disobedience does not need a devil as he himself is a devil. In other words, Satan does not go to the bar but rather stands in front of the mosque. He comes to the man when he is offering prayer to His Lord and tries to distract him in every possible way.

Therefore, if an evil suggestion from Satan inflicts you, seek refuge with Allah *the Almighty* Who says: 'And if an evil suggestion from Satan afflicts you, seek refuge in Allah; surely, He is All-Hearing, All Knowing' (*al-A'raf*: 200). When you seek refuge in Allah *the Almighty* Satan recognizes you are aware of him. In fact, he does not whisper to man until he knows he is heedless.

The objective of Satan's whisperings is to misguide the human being and divert him from the Straight Way. He takes you to a way that does not lead to Allah's Forgiveness and paradise. He tempts you, if you are obedient, through the door of obedience to make you fall into disobedience. For example, when you want to pay alms to someone, he says to you, 'Does this person deserve charity?', 'The amount of money you will pay is very large', 'Your children are more worthy of such money', or 'Keep that money with you and increase it to be more beneficial to the poor when you give it'. But when your wealth increases, you will find another pretext to prevent you from giving charity.

Satan: '...whispers into the hearts of people' (*an-Nas*: 5). This means that he secretly whispers into people's hearts, minds and souls; his whisper is not open like the speech of the people. That is why Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...whether they be jinn or people' (*an-Nas*: 6). Both the jinn and the people whisper. In fact, the jinn's whisper is all about beautifying evil deeds. As for people's whispers, they are more powerful because the human whisperer joins you in committing the beautified action, pushing you into doing it and alluring you to participate in the sins and the misdeeds with him.

The Arabic word '*jinn*' originally refers to hiddenness and concealment. The jinn are unperceivable to human beings yet they see human beings, a fact which is clear in His saying: 'He [the jinn] surely sees you, he as well as his host, from whence you cannot see them' (*al-A'raf*: 27). The jinn are concealed from us and are light and quick, for the substance they are made from is lighter than that of man. Each species derives its characteristics from the basic elements from which it is created. The human beings are created from mud, the jinn from fire.

The jinn are divided into believers and disbelievers, obedient and disobedient. The rebellious ones among them are the devils. In fact, anyone who rebels against Allah's Way of Guidance is a devil, whether he is a human being or jinni. The nature of the jinn is similar to that of the people; the disobedient jinni is like the disobedient human being. Both species have devils; in fact, the devils of human beings are more powerful. The human devil may be inside the man; it is the soul that incites one to do evil. However, there is a difference between Satanic allurements and that of the soul. If one persists to

commit an act of disobedience, he should know that this is due to his evil soul. It wants the person to remain disobedient to satisfy its desires which are many. For example, the soul attacks the one who loves money through his wealth, one who loves to have intimate relation through women, or one who loves to be praised through people hypocritically praising him.

As for Satan, he does not insist on one particular act of disobedience; he just wants you to be in a state of disobedience. If he sees that you have abstained from one act of disobedience, he incites you to abstain from another. The human devils oppose the religion, the Way of Guidance and the believers. They desire that indecency be spread among the believers and hate Allah's rituals and Words. They hate the Truth and the people of the Truth, and cannot bear those who command them to do good and forbid them from evil. Consequently, they enjoin evil and forbid good for the number of human devils to increase. For example, the employee who takes bribery does not like to see an honest employee working with him. He plots against him to get rid of him or whispers to him, encouraging him to take bribery like him. This ensures that he keeps receiving bribery, embezzling money and fabricating the tax record.

At the end of the chapter, we should ask why the last word in the Quran is 'people'. This is because they are the ones addressed by the Quran, for they are the object of all the Messages of the Prophets, from Adam, the first human being, to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

After the chapter of *An-Nas*, the chapter of *Al-Baqara* begins by talking about the Quran being sent to the people to guide them to faith, as Allah *the Almighty* says: '*Alif Lam Mim*. This is the Scripture in which there is no doubt, containing guidance for those who are mindful of Allah' (*al-Baqara*: 1-2).

After this, the Quran speaks about the different kinds of the people, dividing them into three kinds: believers, disbelievers and hypocrites. As for the believers, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Those who believe in the unseen, are steadfast in the prayer, and spend from what We have provided for them; and those who believe in the revelation sent down to you [Muhammad] and in what was sent before you, and have firm faith in the Hereafter. Such people are following their Lord's Guidance and it is they who will prosper' (*al-Baqara*: 3-5). The

second kind are the disbelievers: ‘As for those who disbelieve, it makes no difference whether you warn them or you do not warn them; they will not believe’ (*al-Baqara*: 6). The third kind are the hypocrites: ‘some people say, “We believe in Allah and the Last Day”, when really they do not believe’ (*al-Baqara*: 8).

So, the *Mushaf* (the written copy of the Quran) ends with the word ‘people’ and begins with ‘the Book’, which is followed by discussing the different kinds of people and their differences with regards to this Book believing in the Book; disbelieving in it or showing Belief that does not really exist in the heart. This is a manifestation of the miraculous manner of expression in the Quran that neither ends nor becomes dull or monotonous.

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